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New hope in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Harry der Nederlanden

The news from Africa has not been good lately. The media continue to carry pictures of the tribal violence in Kenya, where animosities and mutual retribution escalate even as bigshots strut across the stage to shake hands. In the Congo, too, even as government leaders met with 14 (some reports say 20) armed groups in the town of Goma to sign a peace agreement, along the borders people continue to die at a shocking rate. For them the peace agreement, of which there have been many, may be more delusion than hope.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been more of a battlefield than a country over much of its history. In 2003 a peace deal was signed after

nearly a decade of fighting that involved militias and mercenaries from eight neighboring countries – Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Uganda and more. However, despite the peace deal, militias kept their weapons and conflicts between different groups have kept breaking out.

Even when relatively few combatants got killed, the conflicts wreaked havoc on the local population. In some of the northeastern provinces bordering Rwanda and Uganda, fighting has gone on sporadically since 1996 as Rwandan fighters crossed over into the country. Non-combatants, uprooted from their villages, have often been forced to move again and again to avoid the devastation, as even refugee camps came under attack.

Thousands of refugees from conflicts in neighboring countries have fled into the Congo, while in other areas thousands of Congolese have fled into neighboring countries to escape the wars at home.

But the havoc wreaked by the various militias have made it impossible for tens of thousands to eke out a living. The population has been ravaged not just by the violence and the barbarity of war, they have been dying of hunger and diseases brought on by malnutrition in areas where international aid could not venture. Cholera, malaria and malnutrition kill thousands of children every year.

In addition, there have been reports of senseless slaughter, torture and even cannibalism. According to a recent report, rape has become endemic as a weapon of

war, but now even non-combatants seem to feel free to rape women in a country where there is little or no law and order. And all the militias have been impressing children into their ranks.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has published a report that estimates that about 730,000 people have died between Jan. 2006 and April 2007, so three years after the peace was signed. That's even worse than during the so-called war years (1996 - 2003) when some 4.5 to 5 million people died. The IRC points out that this makes conditions in the Congo worse than in Darfur. Just in the last year, says the UN, over one million people have been displaced by the various conflicts that keep tearing the country apart.

The Congo held elections over a year ago at a cost of some \$450 million from abroad. They were the first free elections held in the country since its independence in 1960 and about 70 percent of the population participated. They elected the man already in power – Joseph Kabila, son of a former rebel and strong man. But democratic elections did little to stabilize the country or to bring peace, as the Congo is still rated as one of the worst failed states in the world. Large parts of the country have no government services whatsoever, and the only law and order is that provided by militias, which is often brutalizing.

Recently the source of much of the fighting in the border provinces of North and South Kivu has been with a rebel general, Laurent Nkunda. He represents himself and his troops as the defender of a threatened Tutsi minority. To many Tutsis, many of whom are

living in the Congo after fleeing the genocide in Rwanda, he is a hero.

But in much of the country he is a hated figure, and he has increased resentment over toward the relatively prosperous Tutsi minority. Many consider the Tutsis to be foreign intruders. Tutsis are resented by other ethnic groups in part because they have a culture that has enabled them to be more successful in both Rwanda and the Congo. So they tend to have economic and political clout beyond their numbers.

But there are also reasons rooted in colonial history. Because of their ambition and drive, colonial powers found it easier to work with the Tutsis and, therefore, tended to favor them and give them positions of leadership. Their status as an elite made them hated by the Hutus in Rwanda and now in the Congo.

In the same general area where Nkunda is operating, there is also a Hutu-dominated armed group that fled Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR). It has also been party to the conflict in the eastern DRC. According to Anneke Van

See Congo on page 2



News

Pro-Muslim tilt in Malaysia's courts

Observers say civil courts often defer to Islamic courts on key issues.

Simon Montlake

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – An Islamic court ruled last week that a Malaysian man receive a Muslim burial, despite insistence by most of his family that he hadn't converted to Islam. His son, a Muslim, maintained that he had.

Such cases have become more common in Malaysia, whose leaders tout their multiracial democracy as a model of Islamic moderation and economic success. It's a claim echoed by American diplomats and Muslim intellectuals seeking a credible counterpoint to extremist voices in the Islamic world.

But the promises of religious and ethnic pluralism that nurtured a generation of Malaysians have begun to unravel. A pro-Muslim

shift among lawyers and judges is alarming Christians, Hindus, and other non-Muslims who make up about 40 percent of the population. The remainder are predominantly ethnic Malay-Muslims, who benefit from affirmative-action programs to redress historic economic disparities.

Diplomats, lawyers, and religious leaders say that Malaysia's race-based coalition government – a power-sharing formula unchanged since independence in 1957 – is failing to address growing ethnic tensions fed by pro-Malay discrimination and a growing stress on Islamic governance. Minorities are largely invisible in the ranks of police, military, and civil service, while schools are increasingly segregated by race and language.

Although religious worship is freely practiced in Malaysia, Christians complain they can't

get permits to build churches. Last month, a Roman Catholic newspaper was barred by the government from using "Allah" – "god" in the Malay language – to refer to a Christian God. The previous month, tens of thousands of Indian Hindus clashed with ethnic-Malay riot police during a heated rally over alleged social and religious discrimination.

The tensions haven't led to mass unrest, though, allowing Malaysia to continue advertising its stability to foreign investors. Its capital, Kuala Lumpur, displays new suburbs linked by smooth highways and a modern skyline.

Critics argue that pro-Malay policies introduced in 1971 have served their purpose, while antagonizing minorities. But government officials defend the race-based allocation of resources.



Kuala Lumpur

"Without political stability and socioeconomic stability and consensus-based principles, there's not enough to distribute," says Nor Mohamed Yakcop, second finance minister.

The sharp end of the religious wedge is Malaysia's legal system. Assertive Islamic shariah courts, backed by Muslim bureaucrats, have forced civil courts to retreat on sensitive issues such as interfaith conversions. Lawyers say several recent judgments have eroded the civil rights of non-Muslims and highlighted a creeping Islamization in a secular judiciary.

A prominent case in 2006 pitted a Hindu widow against Islamic authorities who claimed the body of her husband, an Army corporal, for a Muslim burial. A civil court declined to rule on whether he had converted to Islam, deferring to the shariah court. Last year, a court refused to uphold a Malay woman's conversion to Christianity.

"We can't depend on the judiciary. Every case where a Muslim is involved in a dispute, the outcome isn't favorable for us," says A. Vaithilingam, a Hindu community leader.

Also troubling, say lawyers and analysts, is conservatives' reaction to public debate on such issues. A proposed interfaith commission was shelved in 2005 after Islamists objected to the inclusion of liberal Muslim organizations.

Far from confronting these extremists, Malaysian leaders have resorted to media blackouts on sensitive topics. Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak tried to end the debate last July by saying that Malaysia was an Islamic state, not a secular state, raising eyebrows among constitutional lawyers.

The judiciary has also been

tainted by graft allegations and political tampering. A royal commission began hearings on Jan. 14 into corruption in the appointment of judges.

Malik Imtiaz Sarwar, a human rights lawyer, traces the shift in the judiciary to the 1980s when the government tried to outdo political opponents by promoting Islam among civil servants and judges. At the same time, a purge of judges and a constitutional amendment to reinforce the jurisdiction of shariah courts removed a secular brake on Malay-Muslim policymakers. "We've let the tiger out of the cage, and we're trying to catch it by the tail," says Mr. Imtiaz.

Aides to Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi say he's aware of the sensitivity of recent legal judgments but won't intervene in shariah courts. A better way, they say, is to gradually appoint senior federal judges who will defend civil safeguards on religious freedom.

Mr. Badawi, an Islamic scholar who took office in 2003, said at a UN conference this month that Islam respected cultural and religious diversity, and that Muslim governments should put social justice before popularity. "A true Muslim will also not abdicate the principle of fairness in managing ethnic relations even if it makes him somewhat unpopular within his own ethnic community," he said.

But his actions in office haven't spoken as loudly, says Bridget Welsh, a professor at John Hopkins University. "What you're seeing is a serious deterioration of race relations."

Simon Montlake is a correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor



Malaysia – The South China Sea separates the country

Congo ... continued from page 1

Woudenberg, senior researcher on the DRC for Human Rights Watch, the Hutu militia should be dealt with according to the provisions of an agreement signed in the Kenyan capital in November. Under the Nairobi agreement the FDLR should be disarmed and its members repatriated to Rwanda.

After the disarmament, the 17,000 UN troops already in the country are supposed to set up a buffer zone along the border between Rwanda and Uganda.

Although disarming all the militias and eventually absorbing them into the military is part of the peace agreement, some experts are skeptical. No one militia is going to surrender its arms unless they see that others have done so, and coordinating such a process is going to be very difficult in a country that lacks almost all

institutions of government. The international community was prepared to provide aid, but there are little or no institutions in place that give any assurance that the aid will ever reach its target. Corruption is so widespread, a recent report estimates that three quarters of the country's customs revenue never make it into the government coffers.

But the Goma peace accord has one thing going for it: President Kabila seems to be behind it, and he has promised a truth and reconciliation process that will bring all parties together rather than punish some.

However, Anneke van Woudenberg, senior researcher on the DRC for Human Rights Watch, said, "All parties – the government, CNDP and Mai Mai [traditional warriors] have agreed one thing – that war crimes, crimes against

humanity and genocide must not be pardoned."

"Nkunda, like any other person, is presumed innocent until proven guilty by competent courts," said Dieudonne Kalindye, professor of law at the University of Kinshasa. "In all successive wars since [the overthrow of] Mobutu Sese Seko, acts of war have received amnesty. The Goma agreement continues the same principle. What is important now is peace, the end of the war, the return of the displaced and refugees, stability of the region and development."

The agreement also provides for the return of DRC refugees living in neighbouring countries under the supervision of a tripartite committee of the UN's Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the DRC government and countries of asylum – Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.

News

Warm feelings from Zingend Geloven

Bob VanderVennen

Thousands of Dutch immigrants to Ontario have been blessed and encouraged by the Dutch-language half-hour radio program called *Zingend Geloven*. They set aside time each Saturday morning for a broadcast that starts with a two-minute introduction by Jack Brouwer, includes a Christian meditation by a pastor, and plays a good deal of devotional music. But now the broadcasts have ended, with the last broadcast aired on December 29.

The programs were started as an evangelistic outreach to Dutch-speaking people and so that Dutch immigrants who were Christians in Holland could stay connected with the Christian faith that meant very much to them in earlier years. As immigrants they were very busy getting settled in jobs, the schooling of children and adjusting to life in a different culture in a different language, and many felt that they didn't have time for church. The programs gave them a time of comfort, a chance to feel good about their early lives and the warm Christian faith that gave them rich meaning, a chance to set aside the uncertainties of their new life, a time to remind them of the rich blessings of being God's children.

The vision for the broadcasts came from two men, members of the First Christian Reformed Church of Toronto, Anne de Boer and Lucas Koops. In 1976 they enlisted the help of their pastor, the Rev. Carl Tuyl, and obtained broadcast time on radio station CHIN. This went well for five years, at which time de Boer phoned Brouwer and asked him to produce the programs, recording each week's broadcast from his home. After five years CHIN switched the time from Sunday night to Saturday morning. Two other radio stations were added to carry the programs, including one in Belleville.

Over the years various pastors brought the meditations, including J. Geuzebroek, J. Kuntz, P. Van Edmond, L. Slofstra, P. Kranenburg, H. Bylstra, W. Kroon, J. W. Vanden Berg and the layman A. Dekker. The pastors came to the Brouwer home where the meditations were recorded on Brouwer's professional recording equipment. The programs were put together ten days before broadcasting and then sent to the radio stations.

The program was supervised by a nonprofit charitable Foundation, of which the most recent Board chair is Baldwin Verstraete. No accurate count of listeners can be made, but estimates by the radio stations say that in years past there have regularly been some 30,000 listeners. Last year the program went on the internet also, and Brouwer has reports of listeners even in the Netherlands.

But it has been some years since many Dutch immigrants have come to Canada, and the immigrants of the 1950s are decidedly thinning out. And Jack Brouwer is now in his eighties and ready to retire from this ministry. So the years of blessing from this program have ended.

Brouwer started his work in public media in 1946 when to his surprise he was approached by the Dutch national newspaper *Parool* to be one of its news reporters in many areas, including the arts and general news. He immigrated to Canada in 1953, living for a year in Belleville and then moving to Toronto, where he worked from 1954 to 1972 for Philips Electronics. In 1972 he was approached by Dutch national radio, *Radio Nederland*, to be its representative in Canada, enabling Canadian radio stations to play Dutch programs, especially music programs. That required that he set up a recording



Jack Brouwer

studio in his home. At first about 200 Canadian radio stations played programs from *Radio Nederland*, mostly classical and jazz music. Over time he visited all the Canadian stations that used those programs. For a while Brouwer also produced a program from *Radio Nederland* called "Holland Calling" that served 20 Canadian radio stations, an activity started by his predecessor at *Radio Nederland*.

In 1992 Brouwer was knighted into the Order of the Oranje Nassau, being cited "For his services to the Dutch community in Canada." The award ceremony took place in Hilversum, the Netherlands, and the mayor of Hilversum presented Brouwer with the award, which was signed by Queen Beatrix.

In 2005 Brouwer was honoured by the Canadian Association of Broadcasters for 50 years of service to the Dutch Canadian community in Canada.

For a number of years the Brouwers have been contact people for the Back To God Hour broadcasts. People who wish to follow up the programs with personal contact are encouraged to phone the Brouwers.

Brouwer and his wife Lenie started a fascinating and somewhat related program in 1975 of mailing recorded Dutch church worship services to people who wished to hear them. This activity started when the father-in-law of their former pastor, the Rev. Jack Geuzebroek, who had never learned English, said he longed to hear Dutch church services again. So Jack Brouwer and Lenie began collecting recordings of Dutch church services, copying them and mailing them out. Word got out that this service was available, partly through mention in *Calvinist Contact*, and a subscription service was set up, with fees that simply covered the costs. Lenie has sent out recorded Dutch church services to as many as 160 subscribers on a regular basis, but currently there are just about 20 who receive the mailings. Today not so many Dutch language services are held in Canada and the time will come when that

mailing service ends also.

Each year *Zingend Geloven* has arranged a hymn sing for its listeners at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, and this year the place was packed with more than 500 having a great time of celebration together. Thanks be to God that for many years people have been able to celebrate and give thanks for the ministry of *Zingend Geloven*.

Every week for 26 years Jack Brouwer has produced the Dutch-language half-hour radio program called *Zingend Geloven*. It was started so that Dutch immigrants could stay connected with the Christian faith that meant very much to them in earlier years. The programs kept them connected with the Christian faith that had given rich meaning to their lives, a time to remind them of the rich blessings of being God's children. But times have changed and the program is now ending; the last broadcast went out on December 29.

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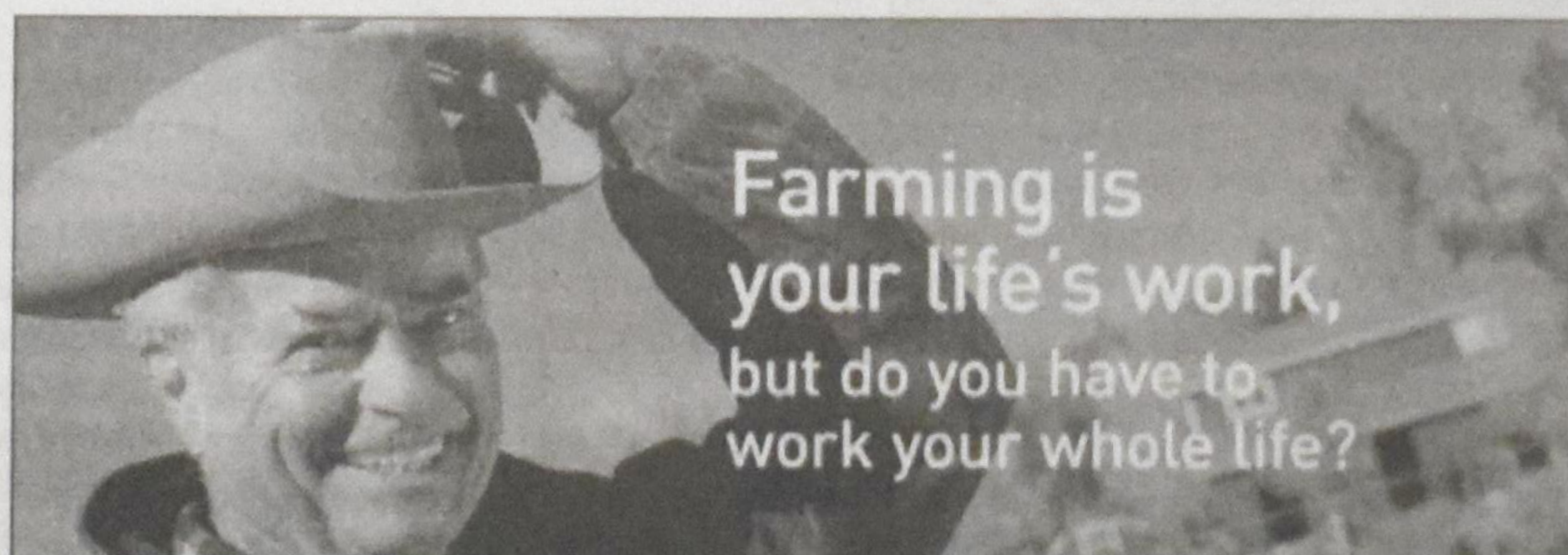
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Editorial

Our green-bean winter

Harry der Nederlanden

I received a good scolding from a couple of readers who took exception to my over-the-top description of hospital food. I could have predicted that. Those who experienced the hunger winter of the war years will never forget it. And they – rightly – will never forget to remind us, their children, that we ought always to be thankful to God for the food that is set before us – no matter how it is prepared.

My parents never ceased to remind us kids of how privileged we were to have such an abundance of food at our fingertips, as it were. If food was wasted or tossed out, it was seen as “zonde”, Dutch for sinful. The word was also used to mean “shameful” or perhaps “outrageous”, in other words, an offense to our human sense of right behavior. But in connection with food wastage, it kept its idea of sinful.

There is a certain sanctity to food, as there is to life. In the short exemplary prayer Jesus taught us, one of the petitions is, “Give us this day our daily bread.” And Jesus feeds the five thousand in part to reinforce the connection between his proclamation of the Kingdom and our basic, bodily need for bread, for food. He calls himself the bread of life, and shortly before his death he gives his followers that powerful symbol and feast we call the Lord’s Supper.

The latter is a very “churchy” celebration, but all Christians sense something of the mystery that binds this sacrament to the food set before us each and every day – if we live in a land of abundance like ours. The sacrament touches the grocery shelves. It prevents us from becoming too hyper-spiritual like the Corinthians that Van Ruler talks about in his meditation in this issue.

There’s a theo-logical economics that undergirds these spiritual acts and facts, rendering them very earthly, closely affianced with our primal needs and appetite. In the biblical economy, eating and drinking are not just utilitarian, neutral acts; they are part of our religious life, part of a spiritual discipline.

I’m sure that as kids we sensed something of these connections which our parents “knew” in a fulsome, nonconceptual way. But that didn’t mean we happily

gobbled down everything mom served up at suppertime.

During our early immigrant years in Canada, we relied heavily on what our substantial and fertile garden produced for us during the summer. It also carried us through the winter, for all summer long and especially in the fall, we shelled peas, picked beans of various kinds, cut spinach and endive and dug up beets and carrots to be stuffed into the numerous mason jars stored in the basement.

One spring, after the garden had already gotten a good start, Beverly was hit by one of the worst hailstorms I’ve ever seen. It was truly awe-inspiring, scary even. The whole neighborhood was standing outside staring up into a sky in which black and purple clouds were churning in a huge whirlpool directly overhead. But the strangest part was the greenish color that covered the rest of the sky and that tainted the very atmosphere in which we stood. Suddenly it became very, very still. Even the dogs fell silent. And then in the distance the sound as from an approaching locomotive. My skin prickled with fear.

As we all began instinctively to move toward the house, a cold wind struck and hail began to fall – icy globes with a white pit at the center, many larger than my biggest marbles. They stung painfully and hammered down on the earth – and on our beautiful garden.

In a few minutes, the ground was covered with an inch or two of large hailstones. The garden looked a disaster – broken, battered plants everywhere. The beans especially were hit hard. They had just begun to flower, but now they were mostly twigs stripped of their young leaves and flowers, which were pounded into the dirt.

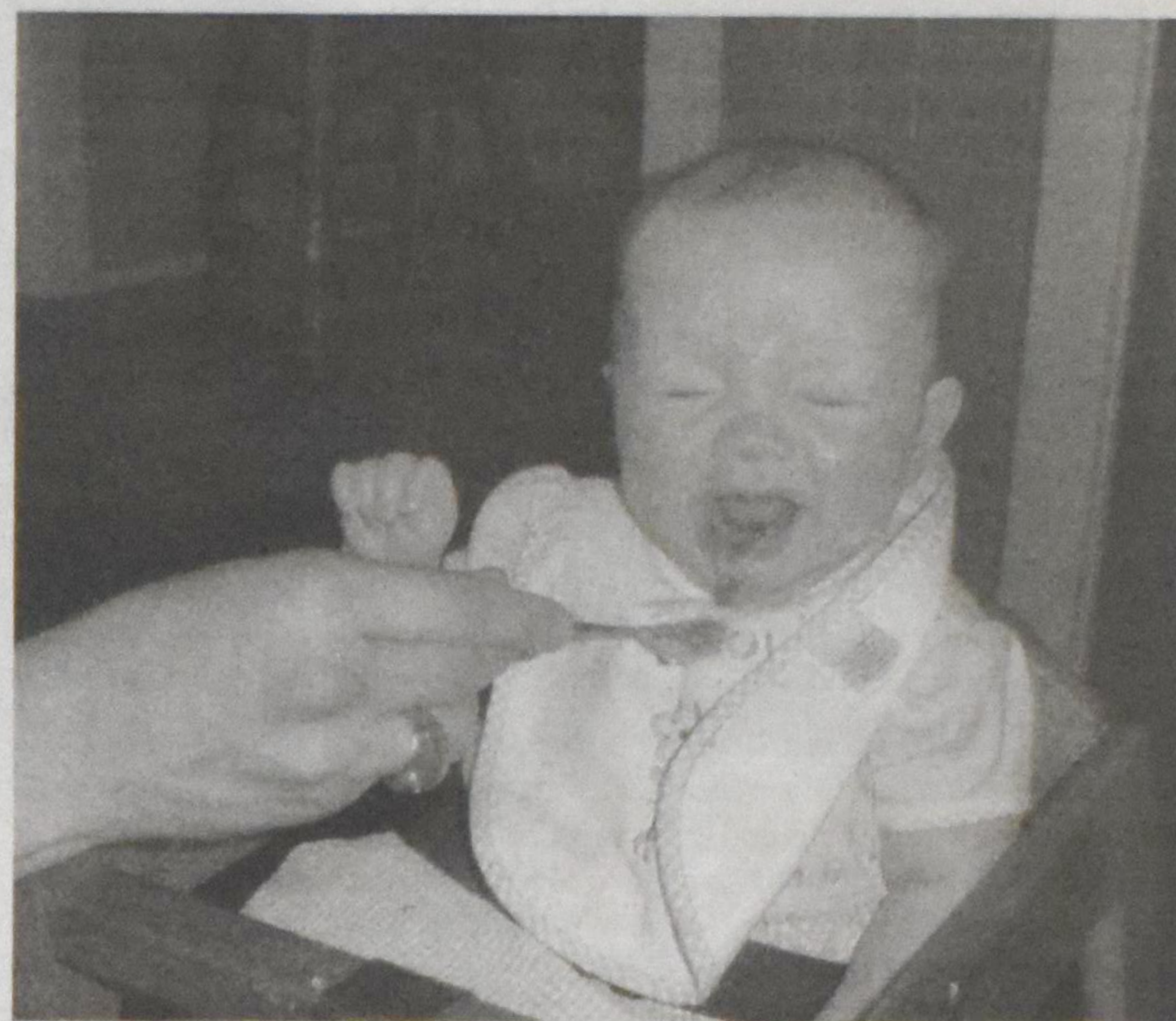
It was one of the few times I saw my mother weep in those early years.

Green beans were usually the vegetable that filled more mason jars than any other. We counted on a good crop every year. And now it looked as if we weren’t going to get any beans at all. Many said it was too late to replant.

But, almost miraculously, the several long rows of green beans revived. That year they produced more beans than any year before or after. Gradually the shelves in the basement filled up with row after row of glass jars crammed with green beans.

That winter we were blessed with a super abundance of green beans, both whole and sliced. I had spent quite a few evenings cranking the handle on our bean slicer and this was the reward. We had them for supper at least three or four times a week. By January I was almost developing a taste for spinach. I even tried “witlof” (chicory).

When my mother read the story about the Israelites in the desert getting cranky about eating nothing but manna day after day, for the first time I felt deep sympathy for them. Before this, whenever my mother read the story, I’d be outraged by the stupid ingratitude of the Israelites. How could they so easily forget what God had done for them, leading them through



First taste of green beans

the middle of the Red Sea on dry ground. Living in Beverly, where in the Spring the mud on the roads would tear the boots off your feet without warning, I really appreciated the Red Sea miracle. We even dreamt of it when the roads got really sticky.

But after a winter of a steady diet of green beans, I now sympathized with the Israelites. I was ready to begin murmuring myself, even to rebel. In my mind I have this picture of us kids banging our utensils on the table at suppertime while chanting, “We hate beans! Death to beans! No more beans!” I doubt, however, that this scene ever actually happened. I suspect I only fantasized about it. We were too cowed and indoctrinated to muster up such chutzpah (a Jewish word) and rise up against Mom like that. Not after the miracle of the beans.

Or maybe the picture arose from something I overheard the following summer. My younger sister Audrey hated green beans even more than I did after that green-bean winter. One summer morning I came upon her walking between the new rows of beans in the garden chanting something under her breath. When I drew closer I heard what it was: “Die, you lousy beans. Die!” She was trying to cast an evil spell on the beans.

My father never complained about having to eat green beans again and again that winter, But I did notice that the next spring he had planted two fewer rows than the year before. It wasn’t that he wasn’t grateful for the bounty of beans, but the human palate does crave a little variety. That’s why God made peas and carrots, corn and onions in addition to green beans.

It’s strange, but when chemotherapy is killing my tastebuds and affecting my appetite, the dish that appeals most to me is, you guessed it – green beans and mashed potatoes. Even in the hospital, green beans tasted better than anything else.

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Canada

Letters/Contemplative

About the war years

The story from Pieter Strayer caught my attention, probably because I remember also the dark years of the war from 40-45. But I only experienced it as a schoolboy and in the part of the country where there was no heavy fighting. But there were also dangerous and scary moments, but it was only after the war when I started reading what had happened that I understood what a evil enemy had ruled our country for five long years.

Recently I read a Dutch book, *Een Groninger pastorie in de storm*. I'm sorry I forgot the author's name. She is the widow of a minister who felt that he had to hide Jews. He and his wife struggled with their Christian duty to love their neighbors and the danger that meant for their family. The result was that he was often away from home from his wife and young son to find places for more Jews. Finally just before their second son was born, he was betrayed, arrested and executed.

Then I read *Things We Couldn't Say* by Diet Eman. Here again was a young unmarried couple that went deep in the resistance because they could not stand idle while the Jews were rounded up and transported to the death camps. They both suffered terribly and his life ended in Dachau in Jan. 45.

Both books are heart-breaking stories. Not everyone had the courage to stand up to the enemy like those people did, and some regretted that maybe.

In Pieter Strayer's story we read that he right from the beginning was willing to work for the enemy. And it seemed to pay well because more than once he mentioned that their lives were improving. Living in Zeeland he was even working in Belgium to help build an airport.

Later on he is also working for the resistance as a spy, and did give important information. He says that he always had a gun under his coverall; he exposed it once when he was working hard to unload ammunition. The Germans who worked with him did not see it, of course, otherwise we would never have read this story. Why did he have that thing always with him? He did not need it to defend himself working for the Germans. It makes me wonder if Mr. Strayer ever had regrets after the war that he was so willing to work for the Germans after it became clear what had happened in all the camps in Poland, Germany and Holland. Probably not, otherwise why would he have told us his story?

Hans Katerberg
Gowanstown

Per verse – subscription renewal

My *Christian Courier* showed March the eighth
So now I better not be late
To renew my subscription – one forty-four –
For another year. I am now in my 88th year,
And I don't know how long I'll still be here.
But I still read your paper from Z to A
First of all – and I think that's okay –
I see what happened; who's been married how long;
And those who passed away, old or young.

So I hope the editor will beat the foe
That is fighting him. And we all know
What sickness can do. Till now I am blessed
With good health. But God knows what is best.
So trusting in him we may go on
Till he tells us, "My child, well done,
What you did here on earth. You used your gifts
To my honour. Not for nought have you lived:
May that be a comfort that, come what may,
We are still in his hands here from day to day.

Yours,
F. and L. Greidanus

Whatsoever is True



Written on the University of Alberta coat of arms are two Latin words: *Quaecumque vera*. Translated in English, these words mean "whatsoever is true." You may recognize them from the beginning of Philippians 4:8. This verse offers an eloquent motto for anyone wishing to be an eternal student. It reads:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

On the surface of it, this verse recommends a tremendous license to the Christian. There are no boundaries to your learning and exploring – pursue whatever blooms with virtue. This doesn't just cross the dividing lines of science, philosophy, art and recreation – it can also include other religions. I know this is the case because Paul demonstrates the point by his choice of virtues here. The string of moral qualities is not the traditional Christian list – it does not name the theological virtues of faith, hope and love and neither does it name the fruits of the Spirit. Commentators all agree that what Paul is giving here is a list of virtues from Greek stoic philosophy. You might say he's borrowing from another religion, just like some of the wisdom literature in the Old Testament.

Whatsoever is Lovely

One commentator explains it this way: Paul did this "in order to show that there was much in heathen views that might and ought to be valued and retained by Christians." Reformed folks might call it evidence of God's common grace. I know when I took Tai Chi classes at a nearby Dojo and sat through a short course in Taoism at the university, I discerned something true and lovely in it. If I had to say it was one thing, I would say the Taoist instruction to receive rather than to constantly "do" acted as an antidote to my Calvinist work ethic and I came to more deeply embrace what God offers in Sabbath rest. It was lovely. All truth may be God's truth, and all beauty may be God's beauty, but we cannot simply use this verse as a blanket affirmation of culture. Paul wrote these words while in chains. It's hard to get much more counter-cultural than that.

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



Whatsoever is Subversive

"I am in chains for Christ," he says (1:13). He pursues the true, right, and lovely in the context of the drama of Christ's life, death and resurrection. This means that affirming Caesar as lord – and affirming his bloody pursuit of territory, taxes and total control is out of the question. Nothing outside of God's kingdom of suffering love can be considered true, right, or lovely. It is this belief that put Paul in prison.

There is one Lord and that is the God we have in Jesus Christ. I said above that Christian learning comes with tremendous license; but it also comes with tremendous responsibility. Common grace is always given in the context of a cosmic antithesis. Paul was in jail because he celebrated a divine kingdom that subverted Caesar's kingdom. Similarly, we today can be pursuing a divine economy that subverts the economy of greed and exploitation that overruns our smoking planet. We live in a world that basically says:

Whatever is true for you, whatever is attractive to your basest desires, whatever is competitive, whatever offers status, whatever increases your image or income – if anything is efficient and improves ratings, think about these things.

I'm preparing a meditation for the commissioning service of a new CRC chaplain at the University of Alberta. As I study the text and context, I wonder if the university community recognizes the depth of calling that is so powerfully packed in its old motto. I wonder if its students even know who St. Paul was. Apparently, ten percent of Americans believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. My fear is that a mass amnesia widens the gap between Christian faith and our culture. As the gulf deepens, whatsoever is true, right, and lovely loses more and more of its radical Biblical meaning, and we are left with a national consumer spirituality. The new Christian Reformed campus minister at the University of Alberta is a gifted believer named Rick VanMannen. He has in his new school's motto a powerful vision for what education can be. May God strengthen and inspire his heart as he bears witness in the academic milieu to the nearness of God's kingdom of truth, righteousness, and love.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



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Opinion

The fiasco of Canada's Human Rights Commissions

During the years when my colleagues and I were labouring to create such commissions, we never imagined that they might ultimately be used against freedom of speech A free culture cannot protect people against material that hurts.

(Alan Borovoy, head of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association)

We have a heritage of free speech that we inherited from Great Britain that goes back to the year 1215 and the Magna Carta. We have a heritage of eight hundred years of British common law protection for speech, augmented by 250 years of common law in Canada.

(Ezra Levant, addressing Alberta Human Rights Commission, January 11, 2008)

Harry Antonides

When the human rights commissions were first established in the 1960s, their purported intent was to streamline the settlement of complaints about discrimination in employment and accommodation. Who could be against such a lofty purpose?

The problem is that over time human rights enforcement, driven by a leftist political agenda, has done the very opposite of what it claims. It has accomplished that by expanding its jurisdiction into areas of beliefs and opinions that has seriously infringed on the freedom of Canadian citizens. (Rory Leishman has done us all a splendid service by painstakingly documenting how human rights codes "have stifled the historic rights and freedoms of Canadians.") (See his *Against Judicial Activism: The Decline of Freedom and Democracy in Canada*.)

Canadian Muslim leaders, ever on the lookout to expand their influence, have caught on that the so-called human rights legislation is ready-made for their purposes. That's how the Islamic Supreme Council of Canada (ISCC) in 2006 launched a complaint against the now defunct *Western Standard* for publishing the infamous Danish Cartoons.

The Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission has recently held a hearing to consider this complaint. The man in the centre of this dispute, the former publisher of the *W.S.*, Ezra Levant, is unrepentant. He said: "We have a great tradition of free speech in Canada. My freedom to publish a cartoon that some radical Muslim imam doesn't like, well that's the free West for ya."

Maclean's called Islamophobic

In December 2007, the Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) followed the ISCC's lead by taking direct aim at Canada's premier magazine, *Maclean's*, and one of its major columnists, Mark Steyn.

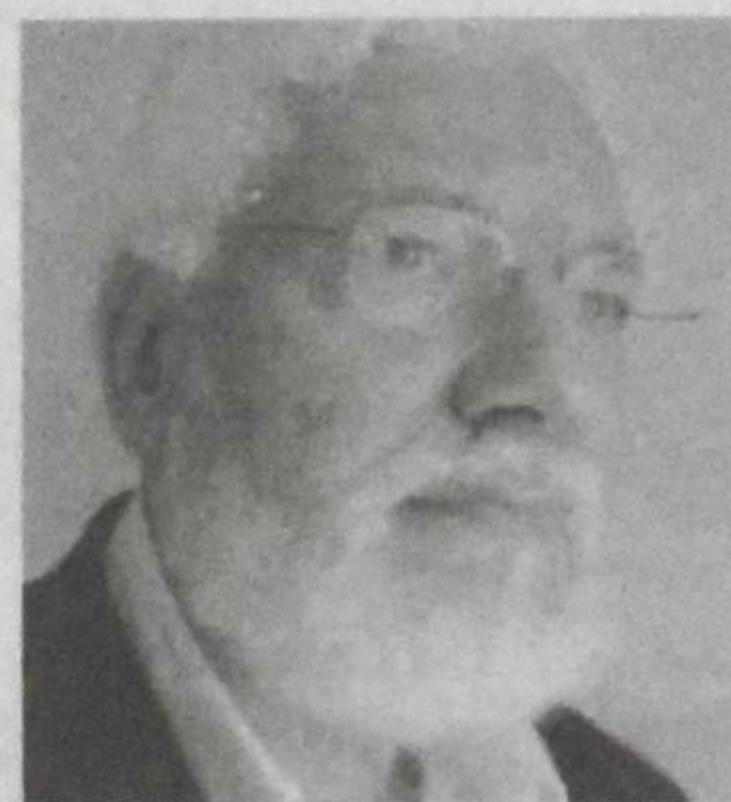
The CIC issued a press release on December 4, 2007, announcing that it had launched several human rights complaints against *Maclean's* for publishing excerpts of Mark Steyn's book *America Alone: The End of the World as we Know it*. This book describes in detail and blunt language the impact of the large-scale influx of Muslim immigrants into the West, the resulting demographic changes, and the impact of militancy among a substantial number of Muslims. Steyn is no less critical of the spiritual and moral malaise of the West, which he refers to as a form of "self-enfeeblement."

The article the CIC objected to was published in *Maclean's* of October 23, 2006, and consisted of extensive excerpts from Steyn's book, under the heading "The Future Belongs to Islam." CIC's legal council, Faisal Joseph, explained: "This article completely misrepresents Canadian Muslims' values, their community, and their religion. We feel that it is imperative to challenge *Maclean's* biased portrayal of Muslims in order to protect Canadian multiculturalism and tolerance."

Furthermore, the CIC charges that there is a disturbing, "Islamophobic" trend in *Maclean's* publishing record. It identified at least 18 prominent articles with "inflammatory content" published between January 1, 2005 and July 31, 2007.

The British Columbia HRC has accepted this complaint and scheduled hearings for June 2 to 6, 2008. The Canadian HRC Commission has also decided to consider this case, while the Ontario HRC has not yet made a decision. (Perhaps it is taking a long, hard look at section 13 (2) of the Ontario H.R. Code, which qualifies the right to file charges with the following clear proviso: "Subsection (1) shall not interfere with freedom of expression of opinion.")

Dr. Mohamed Elmasry, president of the CIC, made all three applications. In the one addressed to the B.C. HRC he stated that as president of the largest Muslim organization engaged in social, political



and legal advocacy for Canadian Muslims, it is part of his mandate to protect Muslims "from publications which discriminate against them and/or expose them to hatred and contempt."

He writes that his organization seeks that protection, because "Muslims have been subjected to increasing levels of discriminatory publications with little or no remedies available through the courts." He underscores this claim by stating that the magazine has refused attempts by other Muslims to resolve this dispute in a reasonable manner.

Dignity and self-worth imperiled?

In addition to claiming that the Steyn article exposes Muslims to hatred and contempt, Elmasry writes that it also has the effect of harming the "sense of dignity and

self-worth" of Canadian Muslims. He seeks to prove that statement by listing 19 excerpts from the article in which Steyn reports what many other authorities, both Muslim and non-Muslims, have said about the actions and intentions of militant Muslims.

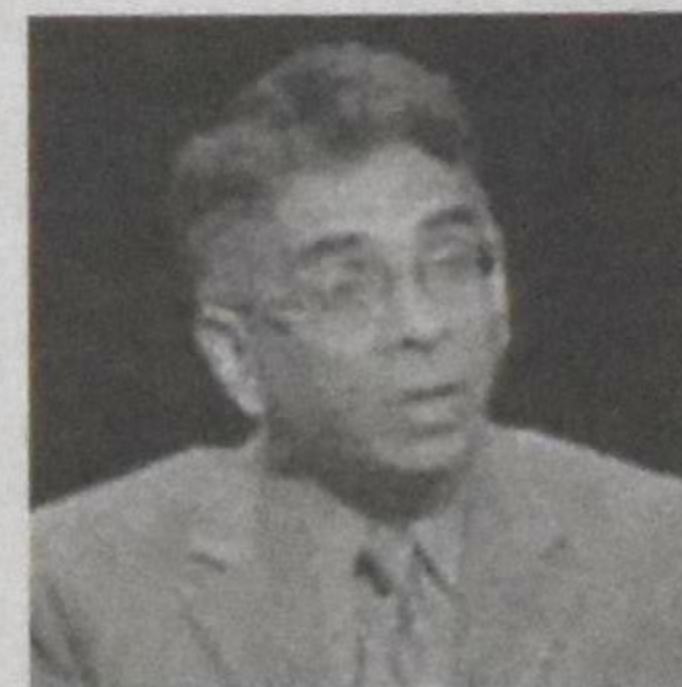
The remedy the CIC seeks is to find *Maclean's* guilty of violating the human rights code and to order "any remedy (including monetary damages) that the Tribunal/Commission believes is appropriate in the circumstances."

Four law students, Naseem Mithoowani, Khurram Awan, Muneeza Sheikh, and Daniel Simard, have launched similar complaints. On December 20, 2007, they published an article in the *National Post* explaining that they were offended by the Steyn article, and by *Maclean's* refusal to publish their lengthy response, which they wanted to have published unchanged and to be advertised on the cover page.

The four students say they are not after curtailing anyone's freedom of expression, but they insist that they have a right to have their opinion published in *Maclean's*. One would think that their training in Canadian law would teach them that they cannot invent new "rights" out of whole cloth just because someone publishes opinions they do not like. Or are they demanding that we too should interpret Canadian law through the lens of the sharia concept? Or, as Margaret Wente of the *Globe and Mail* put it:

Curiously, the four complainants in the case are all law students or graduates from York University's Osgoode Hall. You might think that law students, of all people, would be very big on stuff like civil liberties, tolerance and free speech. I guess not.

While Elmasry may want to represent the Muslim community as one, the fact is that other Muslims, including the Muslim Canadian Congress, strongly disagree with the CIC's human rights complaints.



Furthermore, Canadian Muslim, political science professor and columnist, Salim Mansur, is not shy about his contrary opinion. In his *Toronto Sun*

column of December 23, 2007 he wrote in glowing terms about Steyn's gift to write clearly and bluntly about the implications of the West's declining population and fading respect for its liberal-democratic traditions and institutions. Mansur concludes:

After Sept. 11 the refusal of political and media elites to discuss the fatal consequences of declining population and indiscriminate immigration might well be the preferred mode of those with their heads in the sand. For the rest of us concerned, as Mark Steyn discusses with irrefutable logic, it is riding a train headed over the cliff.

The chill effect

Mark Steyn explains in his *Maclean's* column of January 14 what he finds offensive in this controversy. Among the CIC's list of statements taken from the article in dispute he



cites: "The number of Muslims in Europe is expanding like 'mosquitoes.'" It turns out that this statement is from a Norwegian imam Mullah Krekar. So Steyn wonders what is the offence here.

It seems that the CIC wants a world where a Norwegian imam can make a statement like that in a Norwegian newspaper, but when a Canadian columnist reprints it, it becomes a hate crime. Steyn points out that many of the objections are to facts, statistics, quotations, not to their accuracy, but to their being quoted. He concludes: "But, of course, they've picked the correct forum: before the human rights commissions, truth is no defence."

Steyn insists that there are certain realities, such as the Islamification of Europe, and the high percentage of Muslims in Britain who, according to a recent poll, support militant Islamists. He points out that forty percent of them would like to live under sharia law. Thirty-six per cent of Muslims in Britain, between the age of 16 and 24, believe that those who convert to another religion should be condemned to death. Twenty per cent sympathized with the July 7 Tube bombers. May, should, we not talk about such troubling facts?

Then Steyn turns to another reality, namely the chilling effect of even the threat of being subjected to what can be very expensive proceedings before the HR commissions and the courts. Would it not be tempting to avoid the likelihood of such hassles by playing it safe and staying away from topics that might provoke the ire of Muslims?

This is exactly what is happening in the editorial offices of newspapers and publishing houses across the world. Steyn gets at this most disturbing effect of the CIC interventions when he writes:

Canada is not unique in the urge if its bien pensants [correctly thinking] to pre-emptive surrender: Australian publishers decline books on certain, ah, sensitive subjects; a French novelist was dragged into court to answer for the "Islamophobia" of one of his fictional characters; British editors insist books are vacuumed of anything likely to attract the eye of wealthy Saudis adept at using the English legal system to silence their critics.

Who can forget the case of Salman Rushdie who even now lives under a death threat.

Or closer to home, the case of the CIBC management who capitulated to a demand by the Canadian Council on American-Isl-

Stewardship

Islamic Relations by issuing a craven apology and subjecting one of its top staff members to a humiliating treatment, including compulsory sensitivity training. (Reported in these pages on January 23, 2006.) Instances of this type of voluntary dhimmitude within the West are too numerous to count.



Kangeroo courts

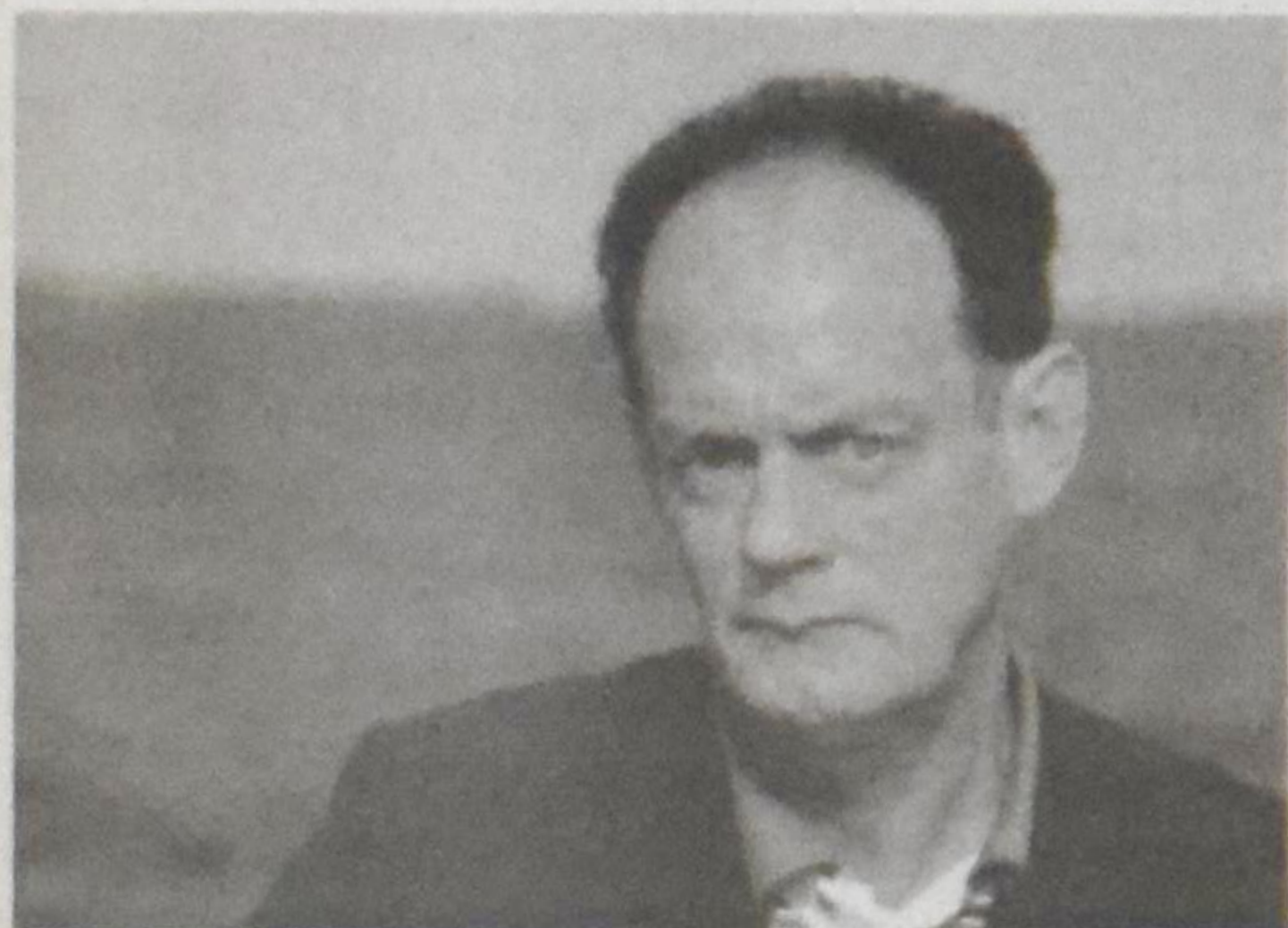
As David Warren wrote, CIC's appeal to our HRCs is a crude attempt to bludgeon its critics into silence.

They are kangaroo courts, in which the defendant's right to due process is withdrawn. They reach judgements on the basis of no fixed law.

Moreover, "the process is the punishment" in these star chambers – for simply by agreeing to hear a case, they tie up the defendant in bureaucracy and paperwork, and bleed him for the cost of lawyers, while the person who brings the complaint, however frivolous, stands to lose nothing. (Ottawa Citizen, December 9, 2007)

In a later column, Warren wrote that the CIC's complaint before multiple human rights commissions is itself a tactic that amounts to an "egregious abuse of process. It is a case that should clang alarm bells right across Canada. Yet, we've heard only a few modest tinkles."

The shame of it is indeed that the mainstream media, apart from a few courageous souls, has been largely silent. Are they, perhaps, like the Ontario Federation of Labour, in support of the CIC, and silently glad about the comeuppance of a right wing bigot they love to hate? Among the exceptions I also want to mention the inimitable Rex Murphy of the CBC. In his weekly talk on January 3, he castigated the CIC and the four complaining law students while defending *Maclean's* freedom of speech. He paid this tribute, well worth repeating:



MacLean's and its columnists – especially of late – are an ornament to Canada's civic space. They should not have to defend themselves for doing what a good magazine does: start debate, express opinion, and stir thought. And most certainly, they should not have to abide the threatened censorship of any of Canada's increasingly interfering state appointed and paradoxically labeled human rights commissions.

Many may be tempted to remain bystanders in this fight. Why should I worry about this silly

Leading vs. managing

What would you do with the money you'd save on fuel expenses if you switched to a more efficient vehicle? If you were able to shave \$800 off your fuel costs in a year – perhaps you would not even notice. The savings wouldn't come in one lump sum and therefore, it would simply be absorbed in weekly expenditures or to pay another bill. In the same manner, we tend to manage the extra cost of fuel on our plastic cards – they just stretch a little more!

With the increasing cost of energy I find that switching to more efficient vehicles, appliances and light bulbs helps me to manage and keep my costs at previous levels when the cost of energy was less. In the overall picture I don't see reductions in dollars spent, but when I look at cubic meters of natural gas or liters of diesel or gasoline consumed, then I do see real progress. When I make the effort to cost out previous consumption levels at today's prices, then I do see progress and I am grateful. That's when I notice.

For the most part, I tend to manage within the limitations of the resources I have to work with. I tend to be a manager. However, to move beyond that I need to be a leader. The primary focus of a manager is to do things right with the resources available, whereas a leader asks the question: "Am I doing the right things?" Leaders think beyond their present circumstances and focus on new directions – to change.

In congregations, leaders, if they're doing their job, will challenge those who take a more managerial approach. Managers are quick to say "it can't be done" because the resources are not there ... at least not yet. That tension, I believe, will always there if leaders are doing their job. The work of the Kingdom is not just to be managed (we made the budget) but rather it needs to be led so that everyone is stretched to be more dependent on God's opening of the floodgates (Malachi 3:10). There is always room for more work in God's Kingdom and it's not done until God is ready to take us to our eternal home!

To be a leader means having a 'heads up view', a view to a more distant horizon.

So what does it mean for us in the stewardship of our lives?

It means we can be optimistic in the face of a lot of negativism: global warming, depleting oil supplies, higher living costs, terrorism, rising pluralism, increasing discrimination against Christianity, decline in membership, etc. etc. can get us down. However, as Christian leaders we tackle the challenges of the day with a winning posture that keeps our eyes looking upward even in the face of opposition and setback. When we don't lead, we are just managing – trying to keep the church doors open and the bills paid. When we don't lead, it's like conducting the orchestra on the Titanic as the ship continues to sink!

Those of us, who are empty nesters, have the house paid off and are still making a good wage can manage the increase

in energy costs. A trip to the gas pump has doubled in the last few years – yet we manage it (maybe not without complaint), but for the most part it's not enough to motivate us to make changes or to provide leadership to make changes.

Those of us on a limited income may feel constrained and are less apt to lead because we are so focused on managing. We may have the desire to practice better leadership in the stewardship of resources but lack the money needed to upgrade to that energy efficient heating system or hybrid car. Yet, many smaller steps can be taken with minimal resources – if we would take the effort to lead.

It may be that in your situation as a young family with high Christian education costs and the struggle to meet the bills, you may feel very limited and you're stressed and you wonder how you're going to manage it. At your present stage, managing to meet the ongoing needs of your family might be the only thing on your radar screen. Yet, be encouraged to also lead. Consider your important parental role in raising children in the 'fear of the Lord'. You manage to provide a home – a safe nurturing environment – but also lead your family to be better stewards. Challenge your children to work with you to lighten your family's footprint on this world. It helps move them beyond the selfish, "getting-what-I-want" attitude prevalent today. Taking some time out to reflect on these things with your children moves you beyond managing into leadership territory. Leading will challenge you to set different priorities. Managing keeps you in the present. Leading will challenge your resources. It's a challenge, however, that I believe God is willing to bless by opening some 'floodgates' for you.

Let us be encouraged to be faithful managers (stewards) and leaders who look up. Let the words of Hebrews 12: 1b, 2a inspire us:

...let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith....

Stewardly tip: Healthy recreation. Power boats vs. canoes; snowmobiling vs. cross country skiing; quads vs. horseback riding, cross country biking or hiking; theme parks or nature parks – these are some of the contrasting choices in recreation. Avoid the more mechanized choices and replace them with more physically interactive ones that have a positive impact on your health and minimal impact on the environment!

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: We can, but should we?

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca



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Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca

feud? The fact is that *Maclean's* is in the fight of its life defending its integrity. But it is also much more than that. It's a fight about the future of this country, and that concerns every one of us – especially our children.

To take a stand in this conflict, rather than take the route of least resistance as many are doing, now requires an extraordinary amount of courage, and quite possibly a great deal of money. Would it not be a marvelous thing if, in appreciation and in support of such rare fortitude, there would be an avalanche of new subscriptions to *Maclean's* from all across this country?

Church

Indonesian pastors seek help on forced closures of worship places

James Varghese

JAKARTA, INDONESIA (ANS) — According to news released by www.ucanews.com, Indonesian Protestant pastors have asked the National Commission on Human Rights to help deal with the issue of Christian worship places being forced to close.

More than 60 pastors met on Jan. 14 with Ihdhal Kasim, chairperson of the commission, known by the Indonesian acronym Komnas HAM, at his office in Jakarta. The pastors belong to the Association of Indonesian Church People (HAGAI), formed in 2005 by Protestants forced to stop using worship venues not formally registered as such.

During the two-hour meeting, HAGAI coordinator Reverend Alma Shephard Supit said he had met previously with several Muslim leaders, including Hasyim Muzadi, who heads Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, to discuss the issue. "But the problem remains, because

the forced closures and attacks on worship places have continued," he added.

In his view, Christians find it difficult to hold religious services despite and even because of the revised joint ministerial decree on the establishment of worship places. Religious Affairs Minister Maftuh Basyuni and Home Affairs Minister Muhammad Ma'aruf signed this on March 21, 2006, replacing an earlier decree that Christians also complained had kept them from building churches.

According to the revised decree, a religious community that is not of the local majority community needs a congregation of at least 90 people and must secure the approval of 60 local people from other religions before it can obtain permission to build a worship venue. Local officials must authenticate the submitted lists.

Additionally, written recommendations are required from the head of the Religious Affairs Ministry office for the district or municipality, and

from the district or municipal Communication Forum for Religious Harmony, an interreligious body.

During the meeting, Reverend Supit asserted that forced closures and attacks on worship places are against human rights, the basis for the appeal to Komnas HAM to get involved in the issue.

Some of the pastors present recounted attacks and closures.

Reverend Norma Siregar from Gift of Love Church in Bandung, West Java, said a group named Alliance of Anti-Conversion Movement banged on her church's door while she was teaching Sunday school. As the frightened children cried, the group members threw benches out of the church. One of them even hit her with a Bible and threw it on the floor.

"It is this Bible which you use to try to convert us," the woman pastor quoted one of the perpetrators as saying.

"We have tried to build good relations with our Muslim neigh-

bors by visiting and congratulating them during Id al-Fitr (the feast ending the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan). We even gave financial support to those who wanted to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. But what we have done seems useless, because violence continued," Reverend Siregar lamented.

Rev. Jeparin Marbun of Indonesian Bethel Church in Bekasi, just east of Jakarta, said a group of people often disturbed the Sunday prayer service in his church by beating empty cans. They also pushed and pinched churchgoers as they walked out of the church after service. "But we did not want to respond to violence with violence," he remarked.

Kasim responded to the Protestants' appeal by telling the pastors: "We will consider and study all the information we have, including a report submitted in December by the (Catholic) Bishops' Conference of Indonesia and (Protestant) Communion of Churches in Indonesia."

On Dec. 14, representatives of these two bodies submitted to Komnas HAM a list of 108 cases of forced closures, attacks on churches or destruction of church property from 2004 to 2007. Kasim promised, "We will ask the president to immediately take more concrete initiatives, for example by issuing a political statement forbidding attacks on worship places."

During the meeting, HAGAI distributed copies of its press release to reporters. The release urges the government to uphold existing regulations and guarantee every citizen's rights to practice his or her religion or beliefs. It asks the government to deal with the issue of human rights violations and to review or annul the 2006 joint ministerial decree.

Komnas HAM, a government-sanctioned though independent body, was established in 1993.

James Varghese is a reporter for the "V" TV news in Gokak, Karnataka state, India, and is freelance journalist working for ANS.

Is American Christianity turning charismatic?

(Ventura, CA) — Pentecostal or charismatic Christianity is viewed by some Americans as an emotional, theologically suspect form of the Christian faith. It is widely thought to be a very vocal and visible, but numerically small slice of the grand religious pie in the United States. Two new surveys from The Barna Group, however, indicate that things are changing dramatically in the religious landscape. Those surveys — one among a national sample of adults and the other among a national sample of Protestant pastors — show that the number of churches and adherents to Pentecostal perspectives and practices has grown significantly in the past two decades.

Growing numbers of people

A decade ago, three out of ten adults claimed to be charismatic or Pentecostal Christians. Today, 36% of Americans accept that designation. That corresponds to approximately 80 million adults. (For the Barna survey, this included people who said they were a charismatic or Pentecostal Christian, that they had been "filled with the Holy Spirit" and who said they believe that "the charismatic gifts, such as tongues and healing, are still valid and active today.")

Charismatics are found throughout the fabric of American Christianity. Although just 8% of the population is evangelical, half of evangelical adults (49%) fit the

charismatic definition. A slight majority of all born again Christians (51%) is charismatic. Nearly half of all adults who attend a Protestant church (46%) are charismatic.

Charismatic churches

One out of every four Protestant churches in the United States (23%) is a charismatic congregation. While some of the most common charismatic denominations are well-known — such as the Assemblies of God, Foursquare or Churches of God in Christ — non-denominational churches emerged as one of the most common charismatic "denominations." Four out of every ten non-denominational churches are charismatic.

The profile of the typical charismatic congregation is nearly identical to that of evangelical, fundamentalist and mainline Protestant churches. Four out of five (80%) have a full-time, paid pastor in charge of the ministry. The senior pastor is, on average, 52 years old — the same as in other Protestant churches. And the weekly adult attendance is equivalent to that of other Protestant bodies (82 adults at Pentecostal gatherings compared to 85 adults among all Protestant churches).

Myths exposed

The Barna study found that several widespread assumptions about charismatic churches are inaccurate.

Many people believe that charismatic Christianity is almost exclusively a Protestant phenomenon. However, the research showed that one-third of all U.S. Catholics (36%) fit the charismatic classification. Framed differently, almost one-quarter of all charismatics in the U.S. (22%) are Catholic.

Charismatic churches are generally thought to belong to a rather strictly defined group of denominations. The growth of Pentecostalism, however, has crossed denominational boundaries in recent years. For instance, 7% of Southern Baptist churches and 6% of mainline churches are charismatic, according to their Senior Pastors.

One widespread view is that charismatic Christianity is found mostly in small, relatively unsophisticated congregations. The research suggests something different. Charismatic congregations are about the same size as those of non-charismatic Protestant churches. Most surprisingly, charismatic ministries are more likely than other Protestant churches to use five of the seven technological applications evaluated. Those included the use of large-screen projection systems, showing movie clips in worship services or congregational events, using blogs, and web-based social networking by the church.

In the past, many have observed that the female pastors were more likely to be welcomed into the Pentecostal

community. However, 9% of both charismatic and non-charismatic Protestant churches are currently led by a female Senior Pastor.

It is assumed faith trends in America are dictated by white churches, which represent about 77% of the nation's Protestant congregations. However, only 16% of the country's white Protestant congregations are Pentecostal, compared to 65% of the Protestant churches dominated by African-Americans.

Differences discovered

The surveys did reveal several significant differences between charismatic and non-charismatic congregations. While the average congregational attendance at each type of church is similar, the non-charismatic churches tend to have larger annual operating budgets: \$149,000 compared to slightly more than \$136,000 budgeted by the Pentecostal ministries.

In like manner, the compensation of each group's Senior Pastors differs. Those who lead non-charismatic churches receive an average total compensation package of about \$47,000 annually. In contrast, charismatic pastors receive a package worth about \$42,000.

Pastoral education is another major distinction. A large majority of the Senior Pastors of non-charismatic churches (70%) have graduated from a seminary. Not

quite half of the charismatic pastors (49%) have a seminary degree.

Reflections on the research

The movement toward charismatic Christianity coincides with several cultural shifts, according to author George Barna, who directed the research projects.

"The charismatic orientation is most popular among the non-white population — which is, of course, the sector of the population that is growing most rapidly. Also, the freedom of emotional and spiritual expression typical of charismatic assemblies parallels the cultural trend toward personal expression, accepting diverse emotions and allowing people to interpret their experiences in ways that make sense to them," Barna explained. "It is not surprising that the Pentecostal community in America has been growing — nor do we expect it to stop making headway."

"We are moving toward a future in which the charismatic-fundamentalist split will be an historical footnote rather than a dividing line within the body of believers. Young Christians, in particular, have little energy for the arguments that have traditionally separated charismatics and non-charismatics. Increasing numbers of people are recognizing that there are more significant arenas in which to invest their resources."

Church

Namibia court says priest's witchcraft excommunication is valid

Rodrick Mukumbira

Windhoek (ENI) – The Namibian high court has dismissed an appeal by a priest, the Rev. Gert Petrus, against a decision by the Roman Catholic Church to excommunicate him for alleged involvement in witchcraft.

The Catholic Church in Namibia declared in 2004 that Petrus had excommunicated himself from the church after he reportedly brought witch hunters from Zimbabwe to his parish in a Windhoek suburb to exorcise it of evil goblin-like creatures called tokoloshes.

Petrus then defied a 2004 order by the church vacate his parish home within 24 hours and stayed there until a high court order in 2005 came down on the side of the church.

Dismissing an application by Petrus to have that judgement set aside, Acting Judge Arthur Pickering ruled that the former priest was superstitious and believed "almost fanatically" in the existence of tokoloshes, and believed in the existence of invisible weapons used by witches to inflict pain or kill their victims.

"By his actions and beliefs [Petrus] had, in [the Roman Catholic Archdiocese's] view, 'defected from the Catholic Faith and from communion with the Church'," Judge Pickering stated. He concluded that Petrus failed to show that he had any proper defence in the case the church filed against him and that the excommunicated priest had failed to demonstrate he had any prospects of success in the case. Petrus was ordered to pay the church's legal costs in the case.

Judge Pickering said of Petrus, "He believes he was bewitched and when he called in the Zimbabwean exorcists it was not to cleanse his premises. It was to protect him from the harm which his parishioners allegedly wish to cause him."

Petrus had argued that three "objects of witchcraft" had been found at his parish, and that he acted to have these manifestations of forces of evil expelled from the premises. As such he did not participate in witchcraft, but instead tried to act against it. He asserted that by calling in the exorcists, he had not participated in witchcraft but had acted against it.

China's official Protestant church chooses younger leaders

Francis Wong

Hong Kong (ENI) – China's government-sanctioned Protestant churches have elected a set of younger leaders at the National Conference of the China Christian Council and the Three-Self Patriotic Movement that ended in Beijing on January 13. While there has been some praise for the younger leadership, some church watchers have expressed concerns the new group might be susceptible to undue influence from government officials.

"The previous leaders came from 1950s, a period with a strong left-wing inclination. The new leaders will be free from such ideological constraints," noted Ying Fok Tsang of the divinity school of the Hong Kong Chinese University. He also pointed out that the new leaders had a stronger academic background than their predecessors. Of the 16 new leaders, 12 had completed higher education.

However, Ying, an associate professor specialising in the Chinese Protestant church, said in an interview with ENI he was concerned

British, Polish churches at odds over care for migrants in UK

Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw, (ENI) – Roman Catholic leaders in Britain and Poland have publicly disagreed over how best to provide pastoral care for large numbers of Polish migrants currently living and working in the United Kingdom.

"It remains our position that Polish Catholics should look for their own priests and parishes," Bishop Ryszard Karpinski, the Polish church's delegate, told ENI on January 18. "But we've no means of forcing anyone. If people want to come to Polish churches, they come," he said. "If they want to go to English-speaking services, they go." The 72-year-old bishop was speaking following some strong reactions to an interview by the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, during which he said he was concerned Polish migrants were "creating a separate church in Britain".

More than two million Poles have left their country since it joined the European Union in May 2004, of whom at least half have gone to Britain and Ireland, according to EU data.

The Polish Catholic church runs a special mission, currently numbering 114 priests in

219 pastoral centres throughout England and Wales, which follows a program set by Polish bishops.

Several British church leaders have called for greater efforts to integrate migrant Catholics, who have substantially boosted Mass attendance in British parishes.

Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor said Polish Catholics could become "a major force" in local church life by helping to evangelise, but he added he was also concerned that "Poles are creating a separate church". He said he hoped they would integrate with British parishes "as soon as possible when they learn enough of the language".

However, the call appeared to be contradicted in a Christmas message by Poland's Roman Catholic primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, who appealed to migrant Catholics to "seek out Polish pastors" and "find Polish church centres".

Several British-based Poles reacted sharply to Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor's appeal, including the Polish Mission's deputy rector, Grazyna Sikorska, who said she felt "spiritually raped".

A Polish school director in Oxford, Hanna

Darowska, told ENI most Polish churches were already full. She added that Polish identity was strongly linked with Roman Catholicism both at home and abroad, and said Polish churches also played a key role in providing help and advice to migrants.

"You can't instruct people where to encounter God – you should let them choose," said the director, Hanna Darowska. "The English [Catholic] church should be pleased its parishioners have increased and not try to destroy Polish churches, which were built up with great difficulty over so many years."

Tadeusz Kukla, the rector of the Polish Mission, which described Britain in a recent statement as a "godless civilisation", told ENI only 8 percent of Polish migrants regularly attended Mass regularly in Britain. Integration is "a task for a whole generation", he stated.

Alexander Desforges, the director for news and information of the Bishops Conference of England and Wales, said the pastoral needs of migrants were the subject of "ongoing discussions" at diocesan level, but said there had been no "specific proposals" for revising a 1948 accord establishing the Polish Mission.

Catholic Church numbers in Norway swell with arrival of Poles

Oivind Ostang

Oslo (ENI) – Norway's government has praised the country's small Roman Catholic Church for its role in supporting more than 100,000 labour migrants from Poland and other eastern European countries. "We have become increasingly aware of the crucial role the Catholic Church is playing in responding to this challenge," Bjarne Haakon Hansen, the government minister for labour and social inclusion told Oslo's Catholic Bishop Bernt Eidsvig earlier in January, the *Vaart Land* newspaper reported.

Hansen was visiting the headquarters of the Catholic Church at St Olav's Cathedral in Oslo. The minister in the centre-left coalition government said he wanted to learn more about how the Catholic Church is coping in regard to its ministry to migrants. He also stated his willingness

to financially support this part of the church's work. The church has said it will need around 30 million Norwegian krone (US\$5.5 million) to continue these activities. "We are doing our best, but our capacity is over-strained," Catholic Bishop Bernt Eidsvig told Hansen. The bishop said the actual number of Catholics in Norway is now around 200,000, as opposed to the only 56,000 who are registered, an increase due in part to the new arrivals from other countries.

Of Norway's 4.7 million inhabitants, 83 per cent are Lutherans, who nearly all belong the Church of Norway.

The bishop said most Polish and other immigrants are seeking help from the Catholic Church to find their way into Norwegian society, rather than from trade unions and other secular organisations, although the church is

encouraging them to use such groups.

Catholic parishes are organizing free Norwegian language courses, while cooperating with the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions in offering courses in Norwegian labour legislation.

Hansen said, however, he could not promise Eidsvig assistance in solving his most pressing need: more churches for Masses in Polish and other languages. In Oslo alone, four Masses are celebrated in Polish each Sunday.



Mission

Micah House – place of refuge

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

In May 2006, Micah House in Hamilton, Ontario, opened its doors. Recently *Christian Courier* interviewed Gillian Matheson, 24, a refugee settlement worker, to learn about this amazing ministry.

What is Micah House? How was it established?

Matheson: Micah House is a home for newly arrived refugee claimants. Refugee claimants are people who have applied for status as refugees in Canada upon entry. They have to prove that their lives would be threatened if they returned to their country of origin. Refugees face persecution based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, and political or social group affiliation.

Micah House was the first home in Hamilton specifically designed to meet the needs of refugee claimants. In 2005, a small group of Christians from various churches recognized the vulnerability and marginalization of refugee claimants and began talking about a collective response. A Task Team was developed to pray and wait for God to show them next steps.

The Task Team chose to call this vision Micah House based on Micah 6:8: "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

At a fundraising banquet in September 2005, the vision of Micah House was presented. Members of the Task Team were thrilled that more than 200 guests attended, and found their generosity overwhelming.

During November and December the search for a property began. Just before Christmas an offer was made to purchase a beautiful home east of downtown Hamilton in the quiet St. Clair neighborhood.

The Micah House Task Team took possession of the house on March 1, 2006. Weeks of renovations followed with many hours put in by countless volunteers. In the meantime, the Task Team became a Board of Directors with new people brought in to assume important roles. The Board of Directors represents a variety of churches and organizations throughout Hamilton. While each member brings a different set of skills and experiences, what is most important is that they share a passion to create a welcoming and caring environment for refugees arriving in Hamilton.

In late May 2006, Micah House opened its doors to its very first guests, two families from Zimbabwe. Since then, Micah House has been a home for more than 125 people from countries such as Zimbabwe, Haiti, Columbia, Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Iraq, Israel, Central African Republic, Czech Republic, Somalia, Benin, Kenya, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Philippines, Cuba, and Mexico.

How is Micah House funded?

Matheson: It's funded almost entirely

through local church supporters, individual donors, and fundraisers, such as a walk-a-thon and an annual banquet.

How do you provide for the refugees' practical needs?

Matheson: One way that individuals and churches can help partner with us in meeting the practical needs of refugees is by assembling exit kits. When individuals and families leave Micah House for their own place, they are overwhelmed by all they need to get established. An exit kit may include items such as a mop bucket, mop, broom, sponges, cleaning products, and basic tools.

We also have an ongoing furniture registry where we keep track of furniture that community members have offered to donate. When a guest is ready to move, we contact the donor and arrange the delivery of furniture to the guest's new place.

What roles do volunteers play at Micah House? What joys and challenges do they experience?

Matheson: Micah House depends on volunteers. We have more than 85 regular volunteers who prepare and host dinners at the house. We have some key daytime volunteers who take care of essential things, such as grocery shopping, helping to orientate guests in Hamilton, helping with English and translation, assisting with house hunting and moving, and much more besides. The roles that other volunteers play include assisting with transportation to and from appointments, moving refugees into apartments, finding and transporting furniture, welcoming guests into church communities and into genuine friendship, cleaning, visiting past guests, creating awareness about issues refugees face, and debunking myths about refugees.

Two of our volunteers, Dawn and Heidi, met one of our guests, Mary (name changed for privacy), while helping with dinner at Micah House. They quickly developed a friendship with Mary, who was expecting her first child. Dawn and Heidi planned a baby shower for her. They also became her labor coaches and supported her as she gave birth. They continue to befriend and support Mary.

Katie, a regular daytime volunteer, expresses that walking alongside people as they get adjusted and acquainted with a brand-new culture is a privilege. For her it is a blessing to meet people from so many places, but also difficult to hear their stories and see how experiences of trauma and persecution continue to affect them. It is also hard for Katie to see the guests face so many hurdles



Alison and girls

in the Canadian system. Her experiences at Micah House remind her that we live in a broken world. The fact that we need Micah House reflects our brokenness and highlights an area where Christians can be involved and step up to journey with refugees.

What is your role at Micah House? What are the challenges and joys of being a settlement worker?

Matheson: My primary purpose is to come alongside the individuals and families who live here as a support and a connector to community resources. As refugee claimants enter into the Canadian system, they face many challenges and barriers. Although they are creative, knowledgeable, and skilled individuals, they often need a friend or ally to support them in negotiating all of the unfamiliar systems they encounter. At Micah House the volunteers and I aim to foster a safe space where our guests can feel at home and part of a family. We make ourselves available to the guests for practical, emotional, spiritual, social, and legal support.

My role also involves assisting guests as they leave Micah House to live self-sufficiently in the community. Continuing relationships with guests and helping them connect with community is really important to reducing experiences of isolation and alienation.

An element of ongoing support requires an understanding and awareness of the policies which impact refugee claimants, as well as a willingness to advocate for the rights of refugees and for justice. For example, Micah House is part of a Campaign called *Wish You Were Here*. We are part of a group that is raising awareness about family separation and asking the government to change the policies around family reunification.

I receive a lot of joy through the relationships I develop with the guests. There is an amazing sense of community here and it is a gift to be included in the lives of such a diverse group of people. It has been

exciting to witness God's faithfulness, provision, grace and love for those who are most vulnerable. I have such hope for humanity when I watch people who were recently strangers become family to each other.

As a settlement worker, it can be challenging to continue relationships with people after they leave Micah House. Many of our friends face loneliness, isolation, and discouragement as they settle into Hamilton in their own places. The refugee process is very long, meaning people are

often separated from loved ones indefinitely. Support, friendship, and community are essential. We want to extend relationship to each of our past guests. It's challenging for me to support all of our past guests without compromising our mission to assist the guests who currently live at Micah House.

How has God used Micah House in the lives of refugees?

Matheson: I'm always amazed by how God works to bring joy and life back to people who, in many cases, have lost everything and everyone important to them.

One woman who lost her entire family in Congo said, "Coming to Micah House has given me my life back."

An Iraqi refugee expressed that, though he is from Muslim background, he wants his children to be Christians because of how good Christians have been to him. Ali had to flee Iraq, leaving his sick wife and two children behind. We received a call from an Immigration Holding Centre asking if we had any room for a man named Ali. We didn't have any beds, but we offered him a mattress on the floor and he accepted. We had no idea how special this man would become to us or how we'd be able to care for him as he missed his family. Ali knew very little English and we did our best to communicate a warm welcome.

At that time there were four young people from Columbia who began referring to their new friend as Papa Ali. This new Micah House family included four other refugees from Haiti, Congo, Burundi, and Central African Republic. Together this group of people struggled through their English and began to develop strong bonds with one another that would provide an ongoing support network.

Ali, the only guest who didn't profess to be a Christian, enthusiastically led our Christmas celebration. We had a Christmas party where people were able to reunite with one another and celebrate the good

Christian living



things God had done for them. Papa Ali led the whole party in a jubilant rendition of "Angels We Have Heard on High," singing in a loud, heavily accented voice, "Glo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ria!" The Christmas carol singing morphed into a Congo Line of people from all backgrounds who were united through their experiences of God's provision for them at Micah House.

If other communities are interested in establishing a home similar to Micah House, what advice would you give them?

Matheson: My most important piece of advice is to pray about it. Micah House has a heritage of prayer. It began with people praying faithfully and waiting for God's timing and provision. The Board or Directors, staff, volunteers, and members continually recognize that we're able to operate because God loves refugees and because he wants to demonstrate his love through us. This isn't our thing, but God's thing.

Secondly, visit a refugee reception center that is already operating. Micah House was modeled after Matthew House, a home for refugees in Toronto. We were able to learn from their experiences about what does and doesn't work. This saved us from wasting a lot of time and resources.

How has your work at Micah House had an impact on your faith life and your understanding of God's love for displaced people?

Matheson: One of the most amazing women I've known lives at Micah House. In addition to the murders and disappearances

of her children, parents, and siblings, she has experienced torture. She escaped her home in the Democratic Republic of Congo and came to Canada in the fall of 2007. When I asked her how she copes with all that has happened to her, she said with confidence, "I praise God."

This baffled me.

She went on to explain that she praises God for the ways he provides for her and comforts her. She knows she is loved by her Creator and that one day she will meet him in heaven. She praises God for rescuing her and bringing her to Canada.

This amazes me!

We are called to love those who are aliens in a strange land. This call should take us way beyond a charity model and into true relationship. We are called to serve those who are widows, orphans, poor, and marginalized. Sometimes as Christians we become disheartened by the suffering we see in the world. It's easy to make the mistake of thinking that God has turned away from his children.

I've learned here that God is asking us to partner with him in bringing justice, mercy, and love. God has not turned his back on suffering people. In fact, he has asked those who say they follow him to actively worship him by loving those who are displaced and alone: "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).



Mists of time

I had every hour of last week efficiently mapped out, figuring to make the best of the time remaining before we leave on vacation at the end of this week. Jack and I are planning to drive the Dakota down to Florida, pulling the motorbikes behind us in a trailer. We rented a house in Orlando for a couple of weeks and we'll tour the Sunshine State from there on two wheels. That's the plan. It's amazing how much work taking time off can be.

Anyway, I was up early last Monday morning, planning get to a 9:00 a.m. appointment in Kitchener, followed by a full day of errands and details that needed attention before our departure. Looking out into the darkness it seemed a little less foggy than it had been on Sunday evening. But when daylight arrived I could hardly see as far as the barn. I stepped out onto the front porch and listened for the traffic on Highway 9. The transport trucks rumbled past invisibly. Squinting into the mist I couldn't make out so much as a shadow. Obviously I'd be going nowhere, probably for the rest of the day.

I poured another cup of coffee and stared out the window at the suddenly small world. What to do, now that my time had ironically opened up by being fogged in? Rescheduling the day's plans was a royal pain in the neck, and yet, being stuck at home felt oddly comforting. It made me think of the snow-days when my children were growing up. I always enjoyed telling my sleepy kids they could stay in bed because the school buses had been cancelled. For someone who's not really a fan of winter, I seem to have an affinity for inclement weather. Maybe it goes back to my own childhood.

I grew up in the Niagara Peninsula, where the weather wasn't quite as volatile as around here. But there are a few storms that stand out in my memory. I remember walking home from school one winter afternoon when I was seven or eight years-old. The sidewalks were icy and frozen pellets of rain stung my cheeks. Glad to be home, I noticed that even the cat came across the yard on tiptoes. Once inside I could hear the radio blaring from my teenage brother's bedroom. Jimmy was in charge, but probably wouldn't emerge from his lair for at least another hour, when he had to get supper started. My mother worked afternoons as a cook at the local restaurant. A freshly prepared roast beef and a pot of peeled potatoes stood on the stove. My dad arrived home from Stelco shortly after five. You could set your watch by his schedule. Supper was at precisely 5:30. Jimmy and I had to do the dishes afterward. Ma came home around 8:30, usually in time to tuck me in. Tuesday was my favourite day of the week because my mother was off and we ate together as a whole family.

I found my favorite after school cartoons on the TV and flopped onto the living room sofa. A little while later I heard the back door open and figured my father must be home ahead of time, although that was unusual. To my great surprise my mother stood by the door. "Mr. Biehn closed up early," she said. "No one will come out for supper on a night like this. I just hope Pa makes it home okay." And he did, a bit later than usual, as I recall.

The lights flickered as we sat around the supper

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

table together. I was mildly disappointed that we never lost hydro. That night, listening to the wind howl and the rain pound against the window, I thought of the treat it had been to have everyone at home when it wasn't even Tuesday.

The morning sky still looked like lead. Broken branches littered the glossy street and all of the trees bowed toward the ground from the weight of their shiny ice-coats. The rain continued to seal the landscape.

With the roads closed my dad couldn't go to work. He and Jimmy found something to keep them busy in the garage. After her morning housework my mother sat down in the chair by the living room window and did something I had never seen her do — she picked up a set of knitting needles and started fashioning doll clothes from scraps of yarn. Now and then she might sit and mend my father's work socks, but I had never seen her knitting, especially not for fun.

I curled up on the couch and listened to the clicking needles and the sound of her voice. All afternoon she told me stories of her childhood, how her dad died when she was a baby and her mom raised her alone until she was twelve. Then her mom remarried and she got stepbrothers. She spoke of living through the war and wondering if the apartment building would still be standing when she came home from work each day, and how she met my father in a bomb shelter during an air raid. I wanted the ice rain to last forever.

That evening we all ate supper together for the second night in a row and then we played Monopoly until way past my bedtime. I hoped to wake up to more road closures. However, morning brought a glistening world full of trees dipped in glass. The sun sparkled on a silver yard that looked to me like an enchanted forest. Schools remained closed, but my father had left for work before I was out of bed. Ma was home for the morning, and went in for her regularly scheduled shift at 2:00. The afternoon found just Jim and me at home. The party was over. But the memories were sweet.

We leave for Florida day after tomorrow. There are still a million things to do before then, but I know somehow it will all come together. Busy is a way of life around here, as it is for most of the people I know. That's why I'm thankful for times like last Monday morning. When I had intended to scramble through a hectic day at the start of a demanding week, God hemmed me in with a thick wall of mist to keep me at home. I lingered over coffee, daydreamed through the mists of time and took a short "vacation" from the unreasonable schedule I had set up for myself. Sometimes a foggy day is just what I need to clear my head.



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Memoirs

Liberation and Peace (Part 5)

Note: This is part 5 of the continuing story of Pieter Strayer. Part 1, 2, 3 and 4 are in the Nov. 19, Dec. 3, Jan. 7, and Jan 21 issues.

Pieter Strayer

All during the war, Tonni and I continued to see each other. We had talked of marriage but the war took precedence and plans were delayed. When the Germans flooded the island, Tonni had been evacuated and gone to live in Rotterdam. There she worked as a maid.

On one of my trips to get food for the Germans, I picked her up and took her back with me to Haamstede. This we had to do without being detected since Tonni's papers were not yet in order. When we got on the Ferry, which was routinely searched, Tonni hid in the washroom. But she left the door ajar and the occupied sign off. No one would think to check a washroom that still had the door open. Then after the police checked our vehicle, and as Groenewegen distracted them by giving them some food, Tonni got back in the truck and we were on our way.

First we stayed in the home of a friend, Toos Manni, in Haamstede. Her husband, Piet, had gone to Germany to work. After the town was bombed, we moved with Toos and my parents to Noordgouwe. A few weeks later, we moved in with my sister Grietje in Zierikzee.

There we lived beside the Orts-Commandant, the German officer who ran the affairs of the town overseeing, or in place of, the civilian mayor. My truck had to be parked at a school in Zierikzee so it would be handy to transport the food from the kitchen to other posts on the island.

One day since the whole of the German unit was being transferred out, my truck was loaded up to go to Scharendyke. I wanted to stay in Zierikzee so I suggested that another driver take the truck. But this could not be done until nighttime. The load included a twenty gallon wicker bottle of a German liquor called "schnaps". This was reserved for use by the German officers and, on rare occasions, the soldiers.

I said to Adolf, "My boy, that is not too good to leave this bottle on the truck all day. If somebody realizes it is there, it will be empty before evening."

He said, "You're right. You live close by so why don't you take it home and keep an eye on it."

Well, with our wedding planned for May 4, the timing couldn't have been better. When I got it in the house, we took all kinds of containers and filled them up with the liquor. I had neglected to check first to see how much was in the wicker bottle but we filled it with water until it felt the same weight as it did when I got it out of the truck. That night, we put the bottle back on the truck and it went to Scharendyke. From there they had to go to Arnhem to fight.

I was lucky that they never had the time to taste the stuff before they went.

The time for our wedding finally ar-



Tower marks location of City hall in Zierikzee

rived. Not only did we have "schnaps" for the guests but also "advocaat". It was made by the wife of a farmer that Tonni had once worked for. Her husband supplied us with butter, flour, etc. to make bread. The miller offered us his carriage and one of his workers dressed up and drove it. However, the harness was in bad shape and once in awhile we found the horse going on without us and we had to reharass him.

But on May 4th, we got to city hall and were married.

All of the people still living in town came to see us. It was nice that my parents could also be present. Jaap Rademaker drove the truck and picked up all the guests from various places on the island. Chairs had been put on the back of the truck and it was full of people. But on returning from city hall and attempting to make a sharp turn, the truck went up on the curb and broke an axle.

The people had to take their chairs and carry them to the house. The celebration lasted late into the night. We had a good time and there was lots of company. The only thing was that people felt bad because they could not buy wedding presents. There was nothing left to buy anymore. Well, they had all gotten off easy.

Early the next morning, someone from the other side of the street knocked on the door and said, "It is peace!" It was hard to believe. We didn't count on the war being over. If we had known, we could have waited to get married. But we were married and it really didn't matter.

The peace

On the morning of May fifth I was cycling toward my parents' house in Noordgauw. As I approached Nobelpoort, I spotted a corps of soldiers approaching. They were in shirtsleeves and were not carrying rifles, so I knew they could not be Germans. They

were led by an officer.

"They must be English!" I thought, and jumped off my bike to take a closer look.

The officer approached me; he was a Dutchman, a major in the Orange Corps.

"Do you know where the Ortscommandant is?" he asked me.

"Yes, he lives right next door to me."

"Will you show us the way?"

"You bet," I said, and turned my bike around to lead the soldiers to my house. There were between eighty and one hundred soldiers in the group.

"How come you're here without weapons?" I asked. "Those Germans aren't going to surrender just like that."

"Oh, I'm sure they will," he replied. "We have another corps twice as large as this on the dike with the weapons."

They had landed on the Boereroad, and when they had not seen any German soldiers, they had begun walking until they had reached Zierikzee. Now they sat down in the garden in front of the house next door to mine. I began chatting with them.

"Do you know someone called Pipping...Bram Pipping?" someone asked me.

"Sure, he's a policeman in town here. I know him well; he's in the underground too."

"He's my brother."

"Then I'll go fetch him."

I rode to the police station.

"Bram, your brother is here."

Of course, he came along, and the two brothers were reunited.

There was also another policeman, Renshof, who was in the underground. This was very handy. Once we spent the night in one of the cells, not because we were arrested, but because the truck had broken down and we couldn't get home.

Shortly after we were liberated, we set out to arrest all the collaborators (NSBers). I knew where one of the collaborators had stashed a truck and some gasoline in a garage along one of the side streets in Zierikzee. He was saving it for his own use. The two policemen, Renshof and Pipping, and myself took the truck to pick up the collaborators. The policemen had holsters but no guns to put in them. It was a good idea to have a gun with you when you set out to arrest collaborators. So I went and got my revolver.

We were under martial law because there was no civil law. Most of the mayors had been taken away by the Germans. Some of them died in labor camps.

At first we kept the collaborators locked up in

Zierikzee, but later they were moved to Haamstede, to a labor camp built by the German Wehrmacht. Earlier I had helped to supply the camp. Now the same foreman went to work putting up barbed wire fencing around the barracks to turn it into a prison camp. It contained 15 or 16 shacks and could hold about 60 men. The collaborators were put to work as soon as they arrived in the camp. Men from the underground were turned into guards: they were issued hunting rifles and orange armbands. We had to make sure no one ran off, of course.

Martial law remained in effect until new mayors could be appointed. There had to be some source of law and order, so Captain Roest selected several people to enforce martial law. I had a car and a motorcycle, so I was recommended to serve as his orderly. It was a nice job actually because there were times when you weren't very busy. The orderly got to go to all the towns. Gradually as mayors and other magistrates returned, papers had to be delivered to the authorities, and people who wished to return to their homes needed permits from the military government. So I had to deliver papers and permits.

Regulating everything involved a lot of work. Those with work waiting for them, like doctors, were the first to get permits. At first things went rather slowly, but soon things speeded up and many of the people were able to return to the island.

Once I had to deliver a permit to a family in Bruinisse called J. Jumelet. He shouldn't be too hard to find, I thought. When I got to Bruinisse, I asked the first man I saw, "Do you know where I can find Jumelets?"

"Sure," he said, "he works for me. But which one do you want - Jan, the son of Jacob, or Johannes the son of Jacob, or Jan, the son of Jan?"

"Just how many Jumelets are there?" I asked.

"Oh, about 32, I think."

So I delivered the papers to the town hall and let them take care of it. I wasn't going to look up 32 Jumelets to find out which



German soldiers being disarmed by troops of I Canadian Corps at a small arms dump in the Netherlands, May 11th, 1945

Memoirs

was the right one.

After a while, all the towns had mayors and government again, and military government was no longer necessary. I was given another job. The foreman of the prison camp at Haamstede was actually under house arrest. He had collaborated with the Germans, so he really was not allowed to hold the position he had been given. I was given his job, and the foreman was confined to his home. At this time we were still living in Zierikzee, but not long after Janny, our first child, was born, we were given a house in Haamstede.

Since the foreman had himself collaborated with the Germans, a number of those in the camp were his friends and they had gotten away without working. During my first day on the job, I spotted a man walking around doing nothing.

"What do you do around here?" I asked him.

"Nothing," he answered. "Don't you know who I am?"

"No, who are you? According to the number on your jacket, you're number 83."

"I'm Mister Okke of Brouwershaven. I haven't done a day of physical work in my life and I don't intend to start now."

"You're mistaken. Tomorrow you begin working."

First, I called the doctor, because everyone had to be given medical clearance. There were three categories – A, B and C; an A rating meant you were fit to do any kind of work.

"I have a retired man here who says he's never worked a day in his life, and I told him it was high time he started."

"Pete," said the doctor, "I think he deserves a category A."

In other words, he was cleared to do any kind of work, from light work to heavy labor. That evening I approached one of the work squads. Some of the men were laborers who had at one time worked for Mister Okke.

"How would you boys like to have Mister Okke on your squad tomorrow?" I asked them.

"Yes!" said one of them. "We'll be glad to have him along. We'll teach him how to work."

And they did. Mister Okke learned how to work alright; he learned how to work hard.

There was another man who had been appointed foreman of the potato peeling squad. He was too old to do much of anything else. But he was very proud that he was foreman of the potato squad. When we received orders to release him, he refused to leave.

"This is a good job," he said. "I get my meals and a regular bath. I like it here."

He wouldn't go. At last we had to put him out.

"You have a house and a daughter-in-law," we told him. "She'll look after you. His son was in the camp too, because he had

been a member of the NSB. Two days later, he was back at the front gate.

"Mister Work Leader, may I please come back?"

"No, go home!" I told him.

He returned several times, but you couldn't very well keep someone who had been declared a free man in a prison camp. When he was in the camp, it was the first time he had been more than a nobody. He had enjoyed being foreman over a squad of men.

The commander of the camp had once been a seaman. He had sailed back and forth to the Netherlands from India at the time when there were still sailing ships, so he was over 65 years old. He was terribly crude in everything he said and did. Once one of the women in the camp said to him, "Captain, you're awfully rough and tough but you wouldn't hit a woman, would you?"

"Whatever gave you that idea?" he said, and he turned and booted her in the rear so hard that she flew through the doorway and crashed into the cell door.

"There you go," he said. Quite a fellow!

This commander got into trouble in the end. The camp guards requested ration cards for new bicycle tires. Eight cards arrived, but the captain passed no more than a couple to the guards and kept the rest for himself. He didn't even have a bike; a car from the camp picked him up every morning and brought him home every evening. He had an arrangement with a store owner from his home town. The man supplied food to the camp, which by then included between six and seven hundred people, and he made a tidy profit. Supplying rations for so many people meant that it was easy for the storekeeper to skim some off, and this was delivered to the captain's house.

We tried to get this arrangement changed, because there was a widow in town who owned a store and who would gladly have supplied the camp. We protested, the bookkeeper and I, but the captain paid no attention. Our protests brought out an inspector, who questioned us and wrote down what we told him. The captain wasn't intimidated at all; he wasn't afraid to talk back to that inspector. "They can't tell me what to do," he said. "I know what I'm doing." And he told the inspector what he thought of the bureaucrats.

Every so often, however, the Ministry of Justice held meetings in the Hague for the camp commanders to inform them about new regulations. The captain never went. One day when I arrived at the camp, he said, "Strayer, you have to go to the Hague right away."

"Me? What for?"

"The head of the department sent for you."

"Let me change into my shoes first."

The camp was muddy, so I always wore wooden shoes.

"No time," he said. "You have to leave

right away."

Off I went to the Ministry of Justice in the Hague wearing wooden shoes!

In the Hague I ran into a fellow I knew; he was chauffeur for a general. When I stopped to greet him, the general got out of the car and demanded, "Why are you wearing wooden shoes with your uniform?"

"Sorry, but my commander told me I had to leave right away and there was no time to change."

It turned out, of course that they didn't want to talk to me at all. They wanted the camp commander. The head of the department called the camp and our bookkeeper told him that the commander had sent me in his place.

"I'll give him one more chance," said the man, "but this time he'd better come himself. I've heard how things are being run over there."

I had brought proof of his dealings, such as the time that we had been issued ration cards for a certain number of tires but had never received them.

The next day, when I arrived at work, the captain said, "Strayer, I just received a registered telegram from the Hague, and I absolutely have to go myself." That evening, when he returned, he hurled his keys on the table and said, "I've been fired. Can you bring me home in the camp car?"

That was the end of the captain.

Our next commander was a fellow from the Hague – a real dandy. The only time we saw him was the last three days of the month. That was payday. As soon as he had collected his pay, he was off again. He never did a single thing for the camp. Some time later the camp was torn down and the prisoners were transferred to various other camps. The employees were transferred too.

I was transferred to a camp in Sluis, where I also served as a Work Leader. In Sluis, however, I was only one of four Work Leaders. Every morning the collaborators were loaded onto fifteen or sixteen trucks in squads often to go to work for farmers, to reclaim moorlands and so on. Each group needed a guard, of course. Some farms took two or three squads, but most were sent to the Moorlands Authority.

I was made head of Inner Services and Occupations, a big title, but I didn't mind. At least I didn't have to pedal around on my bike checking up on all the work squads. I spent the whole day in the office. Under me were a couple of men who could estimate the size of a farm at one look. Because of my experience at Haamstede, I knew many of the prisoners. As soon as anyone spoke a name or number, I could tell them who he was, whether he was married, how many children he had, and whether he was reliable.

Things went well. "Instead of having to look things up," said the camp commander, "I just give Strayer a call: he has it all in his head."

I didn't know those who weren't from Haamstede, of course. I had to type out all those names every day, because a guard was required to have papers for every man in his squad. When they lined up in the morning for work details, I had to announce the names of those who were going to court, those who had to remain in camp, those who were sick, and so on. It kept me busy from six in the morning till late in the evening, because calls kept coming in to alter arrangements. Everything ran well as long as I was there. When I was off, it took the captain and the head of administration to keep things running. The others in the office went out once in a while, but I was kept busy answering the phone and keeping track of changes. Sometimes you would get calls from the Ministry of Justice inquiring about the status of prisoners or to order the release of someone. I also had to record the coming and goings of the staff.

Every two weeks we got two days off, that is, from Saturday morning till Sunday night. Sometimes, such as when a holiday fell on Monday or when you still had a vacation day coming, you might get an extra day.

The day Ineke was born, February 26, I happened to be home. I was supposed to have returned on the 25th: I had received a telegram ordering me to return because someone had been discharged. But there was so much ice that neither the ferry at Zierikzee nor the one at Zijpe was running, so I couldn't get off the island.

Tonni had seen the doctor on Monday and had told him, "My husband has to go back to work in Sluis tomorrow."



Tonni with baby Ineke

"That's alright," said the doctor, "it might be another two weeks before the baby comes."

So Ineke's birth on Wednesday morning was a happy surprise. It was a good thing I couldn't get away that day; otherwise,

See **Peace** continued on p.15

Corinthians

The unbelievableness of gospel of the resurrection

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

I Corinthians 15:12,13

A. A. van Ruler

Who the "some" are that Paul mentions in this passage is no longer possible to ascertain. They obviously believed the gospel of Christ as it was proclaimed by the apostles. So they must also have confessed that Christ was risen. But at the same time they had a way of speaking and thinking about man and the world that had no room for the resurrection of the dead or of the flesh.

Such an attitude may arise from all sorts of motives and arguments. There's the idea, for example, that death is the end of everything. It's an idea that also lived among the Greeks of that time. It is usually the product of a materialistic world and life view.

Remarkably, those who hold this view overlook the fact that even if a person is not in eternity, he will nevertheless eternally be someone who once existed. This poses a problem, it seems to me, that reduces "dead is dead" to the level of triteness and superficiality.

It is also possible that these Corinthians embraced another Greek idea: namely, that matter and the body belong to a lower form of reality and that in death we are liberated from these. In this view, to be reunited with the body would be terrible. The rational, spiritual part of man is higher. It is his soul, and this soul is immortal by nature.

This immortality is not only sufficient comfort for humanity in the face of death, but it is the only comfort we ought to desire. From this perspective, death is hardly an evil, but life is, or in any case, our material and bodily as well as our earthly and temporal life is evil.

For the Bible, this devaluation of the earth and time as part of being human is out of the question.

It is also possible that a few Christians in Corinth had something very different in mind. Perhaps they thought that the future eternal glory was meant only for those who were still alive at the Lord's return.

This idea at bottom also runs stuck on the question of time – time in terms of humanity seen as a succession of generations. They didn't know what to do with previous generations, so for them most of our fulfilled time was off the radar.

This too is an unacceptable idea according to Scripture. God is faithful to his deeds in time. In his final, closing deed he assumes an immediate relationship to all generations that have ever existed. This is another reason Paul defends the truth of the resurrection of the flesh.

Finally, a fourth possibility. There is a hyper-Christian notion that there is no resurrection of the dead coming because it has already happened. We already live in the midst of the reality of the resurrection and of eternal life. The life given us in Christ, especially as it has become manifest in the gift of the Holy Spirit, is already the resurrection life. So we need not wait for what has already been given us in the present.

This hyper-Christian notion rests on a more or less lovelessness and unfaithfulness over toward the world. The world is still groaning with need. It is not yet wholly liberated. And the Spirit teaches us to see this side of the



Paul and philosophers

world clearly and to groan along with it. This form of hyper-Christianity is therefore profoundly un-Christian. It is the very opposite of the gospel.

So there are numerous reasons why some in the Church might say that there is no resurrection of the dead. While they do believe in Christ and his resurrection, they might say that Christ is an exception and that the resurrection is not consummated in his humanity. Or perhaps they have other arguments by which they save themselves from contradiction, affirming, on the one hand, Christ's resurrection, but on the other hand, denying the resurrection of the dead.

But some may have no arguments for their position whatsoever, holding thoughtlessly to both positions at the same time.

The profoundest thought of all, of course, is that the salvation that flows from the resurrection as an act of God that raises us up out of corruption is such an incredible act that we can hardly believe it. Although we hear it preached, do we really believe it?

The bodily resurrection, the resurrection of the flesh, isn't the greatest obstacle. In the context of the Bible, it is actually taken for granted: it speaks for itself – perfectly. Man is his body.

When God does something with man, then he treats him as a living bodily being. A spiritual resurrection is, from a biblical and human perspective, nonsense.

But it does conceal a deeper obstacle that makes the good news of the resurrection unbelievable

– namely, the fact that man is not just a material and bodily being but also a temporal being. Among other things, I am all that I've done and all that has happened to me throughout my years.

I am a stretch of filled time. And the gospel tells me that this how God will raise me up. This means that he saves my life – the life I am leading now, as deed and fate, in joy and in misery. This is the real unbelievable-ness of the gospel.

From this perspective, it is understandable that there are always some, also within the church, who attempt in all manner of ways to avoid this dance of salvation with the living God. It is a heresy that lies within easy reach.

Paul addresses this heresy very flexibly. He says that there are only a few who reason this way. He doesn't name names. Nor does he thunder against them. He only asks, how can they possibly reason this way. And he shows the inner impossibility of this way of thinking from the total content of the gospel. God has revealed himself in Christ in all his power. And Christ's power is fully up to the power of death and irreversible time. His kingdom has broken into our midst. And in Christ God has consummated this power of the resurrection for the sake of all mankind. It is a sign, the beginning, the spring and ground of all what he will consummate in us, in all humanity.

Man and the world are in God's hands, and these hands are hands that raise us up from the dead. They put us upright in life and in eternal glory.

In the face of this, how can we, in heaviness of heart, say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Memoirs/Winter

Peacecontinued from p. 13



Piet in uniform after the war.

Tonni would have been alone, because the woman who came out to help her did not arrive until the afternoon.

It wasn't an easy time for her. She was often home alone with the two children, and the house didn't have central heating, so wood and coal had to be hauled into the house and much more. There was an office for the Bank of Rotterdam in the building too, but the clerk didn't come until later in the day.

When I worked at Sluis, there was an inmate there from Oosterland who was a terrible pain in the neck. His name was Steenpoorte. Time after time a guard would come in with complaints about Steenpoorte, and he would be brought to the office to see me. Several times he gave me a lot of backtalk. Then I would say, "That's eight days for you, Steenpoorte!"

This meant that as soon as he returned from his work detail, he was put in isolation apart from the other prisoners. In the morning he was still allowed to go out to work

with the rest. I had to put him in isolation several times. One day the commander came in and said, "Steenpoorte is being discharged today."

"But I just gave him eight days in isolation."

"In that case, we'll keep him here eight more days so he can serve out his term. We'll lose the paper work till then." And that's what happened: he was discharged eight days later.

One day I was on my way to Rotterdam by tram, and there, opposite me, sat Steenpoorte.

"Strayer," he said, "Would you do me a favour?"

"Why not? I've done you so many favours."

"Yeah, I know," he said, "but you were always fair; you only punished me when I deserved it. I had a big mouth. I talked back too much and gave you a hard time."

"But do me a favour," he said, "and when we get to Rotterdam, come and have a beer with me. I'll pay."

"Ah, man, that's not necessary."

"I was a pain in the neck to you. Now I'd like to drink a glass of beer with you."

It was nice to have someone who had given you such a hard time tell you, "I deserved the punishment you gave me."

Sometimes the guards gave you more trouble than the prisoners. One work squad served at a furniture factory, but they needed only three men, so we sent out three men and a guard. In the evening they had to walk back to the camp from town. One evening the captain of the guard rang me up and said, "Look out your window: you won't believe your eyes!"

I looked out and coming toward



Daughter Ineke visits site of prison camp in Sluis.

Old-fashioned oven-baked bread is the best

I enjoy the winter season. It's not as hectic on the farm as the summer. I enjoy the quieter times – spending time relaxing in the house – reading, doing home projects and so on. I'm not a sports fan and don't watch sports on television.

I still love doing a little bush work. I enjoyed bush work when I was younger. Always loved it. To keep in shape I go to the bush when the snow isn't deep and cut up dead trees for firewood. I use a fairly heavy chainsaw. Now that's what you call exercise!

Last winter there was hardly any snow and I skidded out over 100 big poplar trees that had blown over during a wind storm. This winter I'm cutting them up for firewood. There's enough firewood for the next two winters.

I keep 70-head of beef cattle. That takes a few hours a day.

I love cooking and trying new recipes. Five years ago I started baking bread. I experimented with different bread recipes to make good old-fashioned oven-baked bread just like my mother used to make.

Leafing through a collection of recipes that my mother saved in a photo album, I came across a recipe for country-style bread making. It was in my mom's handwriting from the days she baked bread in the 1960's and 70's. The recipe makes eight to 10 loaves. A couple of simple changes were made and I think it's the best homemade bread I've eaten in years.

I let the dough rise in all 10 bread pans. Five pans go in the oven and are baked for 30 minutes. Then the other five go in. The bread comes out with a crispy crust that's so tasty you can't wait to cut off a slice, spread some butter, and peanut butter or cheese on it, and eat it. Some things money can't buy!

I read that researchers in Germany have discovered that bread crusts are a rich source of antioxidants and may provide a stronger health benefit than the rest of the bread. The study is the first to identify a cancer-fighting compound that is concentrated in the crust, says the leading researcher. In general, dark-coloured breads such as pumpernickel and whole wheat contain more of these antioxidants than light-coloured breads.

the gate from town was the guard and his three prisoners. The guard was being held up by a prisoner on each side, and the third prisoner walked behind him, carrying his rifle. They had walked through town that way.

"Send him up!" I ordered.

"Turn in your uniform within the hour," I told him. "And then you may go home."

"I get paid first, don't I?"

"No, you don't," I answered. "We got a letter from your wife in Amsterdam. She writes, 'My husband has been working there for a long time already, but enough is enough. I'm happy that we're liberated from the Germans, but

to make a man work this long without pay is too much.'"

Of course, the man had never worked without pay. The government paid him good wages and also added an allowance for each child. He had a wife and ten children, so he got a big paycheck, but he had never sent any money home to support his family.

"But how do I get home?" he demanded.

"You can walk. It will give you a chance to think about how you shortchanged your family over the last two years."

It turned out that he had spent his days off with a woman in Vlissingen. She had helped him spend

Country Living
M. van der Galien



Baking ingredients

You don't need to keep too many ingredients on hand to bake bread. Yeast is the heart of the bread making process. It's the essential ingredient that makes the dough rise. The yeast, which I buy from a bulk food store, has thousands of living plant-like micro-organisms. When activated by warm liquid, and fed by sugar, the yeast releases tiny bubbles of carbon dioxide gas. This gas causes the dough to rise and achieve its light texture after baking. Other ingredients are added to complete the reactions that result in a perfectly baked loaf of hot, crusty homemade bread.

Wheat is rich in gluten, a protein that gives dough its elasticity and strength. When yeast and flour are mixed with liquid and then kneaded, the gluten forms and stretches to create a network that traps the carbon dioxide bubbles produced by the yeast.

Recipes with whole-wheat flour have less gluten and make denser loaves. That's the reason recipes generally require some all-purpose flour which increases the gluten and makes lighter, taller loaves.

Water is the most important liquid because it does two critical things: It dissolves and activates the yeast. It blends with the flour to create a sticky and elastic dough. I add a few cups of milk to the water, which enhances the flavour and texture. Only warm liquids should be added to dry ingredients in a recipe because: 1. A too-cool liquid will slow yeast action. 2. A too-hot liquid will destroy the yeast and prevent it from rising.

Sugar adds flavour and rich brown colour to a bread's crust. Salt is an important ingredient in bread baking because it: 1. Slows rising time, allowing the flavour of the dough to develop. 2. Adds structure to the dough by strengthening the gluten, which keeps the carbon dioxide bubbles from expanding too rapidly.

Today was a blustery, cold day – a good day to be indoors and.... The aroma of fresh baked bread beckons. It's time for a cup of tea and a slice of warm bread with cheese.

Maynard van der Galien farms near Renfrew, Ont.



his money too, of course. The guards got two days off every two weeks; they were also given travel expenses. He had collected travel expenses to Amsterdam every two weeks but had never gone home. I sent the wages for the last two months home to his wife.

Some time later, two inspectors from the Hague arrived to investigate. It seems that I had treated him unfairly, firing him like that. But he never got his job back. I told my story to the camp commander, and he said, "You did the right thing. He wouldn't have fared any better with me." So I didn't care

Continued on p. 17

Nature

A little bare ground, please

Flowers & Thistles

Curt Gesch



I remember once reading in a hunting book that pheasants can take any weather, but “not where there is normally an accumulation of winter snow.” What? We lived in east-central Wisconsin and had pheasants and lots of snow. The Dakotas have lots of snow and more pheasants than a boyar had collared serfs (lame joke intended).

Two possibilities: 1) I was right and the the book was wrong; 2) there was something that I hadn’t understood about that sentence, or pheasants, or snow, or all three.

Having at least a modicum of humility and a great deal of curiosity, I chose to pursue #2. What didn’t I “get?”

I suppose the key word was “accumulation.” Pheasants (the ring-necked ones) thrive on prairies where there is cold, cold wind. Wind blows snow. I knew that. I also knew that wind bares the soil in certain places and forms drifts in others. But there is almost always somewhere to scratch, to forage for waste grains. The same wind that moves snow reveals food. So, at least in places, there is no accumulation of snow.

South Dakota winds are no picnic for pheasants. The wind-chill may drop below -40° (C. and F. are the same), but pheasants can take it: they retreat to shelterbelts or cattail swamps for the night, but move out to the stubble fields to glean when weather permits. Grey (Hungarian) partridges are even tougher, seeming to thrive on wind, cold, and blowing snow. (There must be lots of them in Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wisconsin, during the football season.)

In Pemberton, B.C., a heavy snow region near the site of the 2010 Winter Olympics, pheasants just don’t thrive. Sportsmen have tried to establish populations, but it just won’t work. It’s certainly not *that* cold: not as cold as Winner, South Dakota, for example. The only pheasants that survive the gloppy, heavy snow in Pemberton are those that hang out in farmyards where cattle trample the snow, and spill or excrete undigested grain. Cows leave the ground muddy and bare.

In my region of B.C. various residents also release ring-necked pheasants. Some survive coyotes, great horned owls, goshawks, and dogs, but few make it through the winter. Not too cold, although it can reach -40 . Plenty of food: there are snowberries and rose hips all over the countryside. But there is one thing lacking: bare ground. The few pheasants that survive through the winter mainly hang out in barnyards.

Ruffed grouse, on the other hand, don’t need any bare ground. They fly up to a willow, birch, or apple tree and eat buds. They sleep, when it gets cold, beneath the snow’s blanket. They walk on top of the snow using the little snowshoe hairs (another intentional lame joke) that they grow on their toes. Ptarmigan are just like grouse: buds, berries, and snowshoes make for a good winter as long as there is a little grit. And grit – gravel or sand for grinding food in the gizzard – appears on bare ground. Roads, for example; this explains the numbers of squashed grouse and ptarmigan in regions where there are roads.

Still, in even the deepest snow country there are isolated spots of bare ground for birds that need to be in close contact with the soil. Underneath heavy, heavy, heavy canopies of spruce (or rarely, pine) there can be bare ground. If an early, heavy snow bends over the lilacs or shrubs in your yard, frustrating the gardener, you may be sure that under those mangled shrubs is a cavern of cover, food, and bare ground.

As I’ve written before, I try to maintain a few weed patches for winter food for seed-loving birds. Heavy snow in my area wreaks havoc on most of the weeds, but some

survive, sticking through the snow to provide snack bars for song sparrows and redpolls. I’m still trying to find the weed that combines a stiff stalk and nutritious seeds. Cosmos works in some places. Next year I’m going to try hemp. (I can hear the snickers, but shall not reply.)

In the meanwhile, however, I do what I can to provide bare ground for the juncos, song sparrows, and tree sparrows that prefer their birth-land to the fair sunshine of the snowbirds.

Overhanging eaves provide bare ground. I scatter a little bird seed right up against the chicken coop, garage and sheds.

One of my sheds is open on one side (city folk might call this a car-port, but for us it is a stable/tractor barn/wood-and-garden-tool-shed). Song sparrows seem to enjoy the unpaved floor and the nooks and crannies of the firewood piles.

My most-sought-after bare ground, however, is in the grassy weedy patch next to the garage where I store my two canoes — upside down, on saw horses — for the winter. So far, no snow has blown beneath them. The only competition for the ground-loving birds comes in the form of mammals: mice and voles, which also love seeds; Cat, the cat, who loves mice and voles; and Chester the Wonder Dog, who likes to sleep outside under the canoes when it’s just a little *too* cold to sleep on a snow bank.



Bare ground. It can be a mark of abuse. G.M. Hopkins describes this in “God’s Grandeur”:

*Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.*

That’s one kind of bare ground. But I doubt that wintering songbirds are causing compaction. The kind of bare ground that I am talking about is the one that provides contact with the soil, a place to do instinctual scratching, a small habitat for a winged creature of earth.

I suppose that juncos don’t need to remove their shoes to know that the ground they scratch upon is holy. All they want is to touch the earth, in the middle of a cold winter.

Curt Gesch is a retired schoolteacher living in Quick, B.C., who would like to know how and where he could acquire some Frisian chickens.



Memoirs/Perceptions

Peace ... continued from p. 15



Pieter Strayer receiving recognition and a medal for his work in the underground from Dutch representative W. VanLanschot in 1982.

what the inspector from the Hague thought.

I should also mention that in 1945 some of us had an audience in Zierikzee with Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard. Prince Bernhard had been well informed about what had happened on the island. Rademaker, one of the men who had worked in the underground, asked the prince why those who had worked for the Germans had received a grant of a military truck while he had not. Princess Juliana's secretary was instructed to straighten things out. Rademaker

got his truck.

In 1948 the prison camp at Sluis was closed and the remaining prisoners were transferred to Domsburg and Yrseke. We were all laid off with three months severance pay. I returned to my old job of truck driver where I had worked before the war. Later, I went to work at the flax mill.

Early in February 1953, storm-driven tides burst dikes and our island was flooded. Shortly thereafter, we immigrated to Canada. The Mannis had already immigrated and they helped us get settled in Ontario.



The flood of 1953 forced the family to evacuate.

I began these recollections by saying: Here I am, 75 years old and sitting in my own home. When I think back to all the dangers and to the risky things we did, I am thankful to our Heavenly Father for his blessings and for answering our prayers during those difficult times. He spared not only us, but also our fiancées, Tonni and Jaap Rademaker's girl, who

also knew a lot about our work. Sometimes, when I remember the dangers to which we exposed ourselves, my nerves still get the better of me and fear grips my heart. I was just a truck driver, and what we did was done "God-with-us". Never forget this my children and grandchildren – this was the only reason we were able to do what we did. The Lord blessed me, not only during the war, but later too, when I was stricken with cancer.

The doctor told me, "You have about six weeks to live." That was more than twenty years ago.

Whether you are reading this now or later to grandchildren not yet born, I pray for all of you each day of my life. And although in time you will forget me, never forget your Heavenly Father, who will also bless you. In life and in death always give him the glory.

This is what your father and grandfather wishes for you.

When it comes to loneliness... we are not alone

"I am lonely in my marriage," remarks a middle-aged woman.

"I belong to a group of friends...I ask them questions about their lives...but they rarely seem interested in mine," confides a young man.

"I recently lost my husband of 45 years, I miss him so much," shares a sorrowful widow.

"I am 83 years old and have a lot of time on my hands. I have six children but they are all busy. I don't talk about it with my friends, they will think I am complaining," relates an aging gentleman.

"I am 36 years old and would love to be married, but the 'right' one still has not come along, I guess," says a professional woman.

"I feel lonely in a crowd of my friends. They all have children and I do not," confesses a young man.

"I have a life-threatening illness and people hesitate to visit me," confides a 51-year-old woman.

When it comes to loneliness...we are not alone! Studies suggest at least 75 per cent of North Americans have experienced serious bouts of loneliness, while living in an age of rapid global communication technology. We can dial up, hook on and log on...anytime...to satisfy our need to 'touch someone.' If this is so, what could be going on?

Various theorists have written about 'loneliness.' Martha Beck, for instance, believes we experience 'absolute loneliness' when we think no one understands us nor does anyone want to (wrongly or rightly) make the effort to do so. This kind of loneliness is also about feeling 'different' from others (for whatever reason). When we feel 'absolutely lonely' we have few personal interactions and live emotional solitary lives. The isolation can create deep despair leaving us with little energy to work towards a solution thereby increasing the feeling that 'no one cares.'

Beck also believes 'separation loneliness' is becoming more common in our technologically advanced age. Traveling, empty nesting, long distance relationships and certain kinds of jobs can distance us from friends and family. Before the Industrial Revolution most people worked close to home, now we leave home and travel to distant places leaving spouses to care for small children without the help of extended family. Our global village makes life on the run more possible but also more lonely.

Beck's third category is 'existential loneliness,' the bedrock fact of the human condition. Here we realize no one can help us face the moments when we are most bereft and we are left with emptiness

or despair. We, also, begin to realize no one can take risks for us, face our losses on our behalf or give us a healthy self-concept. No one can spare us from life's slings and arrows, and when death comes, we meet it alone. And so, we lament 'this is life.' In fact, existential loneliness, the great burden of human consciousness, can also be a great gift – if we treat it properly.

Another interesting contribution comes from Randy Freeze, author of *The Connecting Church* and *Making Room for Life*. He believes North Americans are suffering from "crowded loneliness" which he defines as overexposure to people without a deep connection with any one person or group of people.

But it is George Vanier, founder of L'Arche, an international network of communities for people with intellectual disabilities and author of *Becoming Human* who has seen the despair and anguish loneliness creates. He writes: "when people are physically well, performing creatively and are successful in their lives, loneliness seems absent. But I believe that loneliness is something essential to human nature; it can only be covered over, it can never actually go away. Loneliness is part of being human, because there is nothing in existence that can completely fulfill the needs of the human heart." At the same time, loneliness can rise up and threaten to overwhelm so that life loses its meaning and loneliness can feel like death.

Still, dealing with loneliness is not easy. Our culture surrounds us with quick fixes and distractions. Our technology encourages us to hook up and log on for no other reason but to be connected to someone. If that does not satisfy us we have our television, alcohol, sports, hobbies, drugs...anything to fill the hollow feeling inside us. And then, of course, we can do 60 hour workweeks...all in an attempt to suppress the pain of loneliness. The results, unfortunately, are always temporary and the dark shadow of loneliness continues to haunt us becoming a source of apathy and depression. To be human, however, is not to be crushed by reality, but to find hope in being created for connections. (More about finding healing for loneliness in next month's column.)

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca



P.S. The booklet of the memoirs of Pieter Strayer published in *Christian Courier* is now available for \$15.00. Please contact Ineke Medcalf at 905-937-3314 or email ads@christiancourier.ca. Mr. Strayer died in 1993 at the age of 78 and these memoirs were published in CC with the permission of his daughter.

Reflections

From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

Normally, I relish writing this column. I enjoy the actual writing of it. And I enjoy even more the satisfaction of being able to read each column when the writing is finished, when I've managed to make the point or points that I wanted to make (I think). Though that enjoyment may be temporarily minimized by little typos and other mistakes I missed, causing the need to phone Harry der Nederlanden to call them to attention, all in all, writing in general and writing this column in particular is not only pleasant, I feel it as a calling.

But today writing feels like hard work, a chore that needs doing, the meeting of a deadline that came too soon and on the wrong day. Of course this isn't the first time I've felt that way in all the years I've been writing. But it normally happens on gray, dispiriting days – cold or rainy or both; damp, colorless days that seem to suck the joy and energy out of a person.

Today is most decidedly not a gray day. The winter sun, in fact, is pouring into the windows behind me. Two napping cats (one on a filing cabinet, the other on my laser printer) are taking good advantage of it. No depression for them!

Depressed by darkness

My moods and even physical well-being seem extremely affected by weather, especially by sunlight, or the lack thereof. Even though I am not a person who much appreciates the modern habit of attaching "disease," "disorder" or "syndrome" to an ever greater number of human conditions and actions (many of which seem to me to be a part of life we simply have to deal with in our fallen world), I sometimes wonder if I have seasonal affective disorder (SAD). That acronym is highly appropriate; the condition is apparently related to low light levels and how lack of sunlight can affect some people's physiology and psychology.

Whatever the reason or reasons, well-formed thoughts aren't flowing swiftly and mightily from my electronic pen in a small metaphorical version of the swift and mighty Niagara rushing through its gorge a few hundred yards away. When I write this column each month I want to have "something to say"; something of importance, worth the time you invest in reading it. But I feel I have no such thing to offer today.

Perhaps I'm too caught up in my own affairs. I'm still thinking about the sermon we heard yesterday morning. The retired pastor, the current fill-in while the church at which I'm the music director is without its own pastor, seems to be a thoughtful, compassionate man who takes preaching seriously. He preaches from the Bible – which is more than can be said for many mainline Protestant clergy. But he seems to leave listeners hanging in ways he shouldn't. Then in the next breath he will say something so *gospel*-oriented that it becomes one of those "ahhh" moments that hit you when the Word of God is being explicated in all its richness and the Spirit is at work. Yet this pastor often doesn't seem to want to be as explicit with the Truth as Scripture is.

Who is Jesus?

The sermon was Part 2 of a four-part series called "Who is Jesus?" The series is based on four Sundays of lectionary texts from the gospel of John for the Epiphany season. "Who is Jesus" is the most important question anyone could ask. I think you'll agree. Or perhaps I should say, the answer one gives to that question is the most important statement any person can make.

So why, I ask myself, would this pastor carefully go through everything John the Baptist says about Jesus in the

Of gray days, troubling sermons, lunatics and prayer

text, explaining Jesus's roles as teacher, "Lamb of God" and even Messiah, yet never refer to Jesus as the Son of God, as the text he preached from clearly does? (Or am I quibbling about implications the pastor didn't intend?) And why would he explain "who takes away the *sin of the world*" in a way that allows you to comfortably maintain (if you wish) that, in the end, God will condemn no one. (That naturally brings up the question: Why would Christ, then, have to die for us at all, or have been incarnated in the first place?)

This man doesn't seem to like the Old Testament either. That's odd for a Lutheran, since Lutherans understand pretty much as well as Calvinists do how the two Testaments fit together and that the Old can't just be tossed out because we're now living in a new "dispensation."

Sifting wheat from tares

This pastor makes people think. But of course, simply making us think isn't really the point. Pastors must bring the Word of the Lord, not their own word, and the people who hear should experience burning hearts and ears set afire by the Spirit. When you've experienced that again and again in your life (ideally, every week) and grow week by week because of it, it's a hard thing when it happens only sporadically. It's a chore, instead, to have to sift the wheat from the tares, grasping for what kernels of wholesome grain there may be and trying to let the rest blow away. This particular pastor, by the way, is better than most we've heard during this "vacancy." (The leaders and congregation of this church, I should say, are quite evangelical.)

While the mainline Protestant churches are drifting further and further from historic biblical Christianity (and Rome tries to maintain it), many Evangelical churches have their own problems (most of them don't like the Old Testament either, and ignore most of it most of the time). The Reformed churches aren't exempt, of course, from the Satan-inspired secularizing and paganizing spirits attempting to blow apart and disintegrate the Church worldwide. But Reformational Christianity (Calvinist particularly, but Lutheran too) has a biblical profundity and understanding that, if maintained (or, where necessary, uncovered once more) can be of greater help to fellow Christians (and a greater witness to the world) than any other Christian tradition I can think of. It all hinges on how Reformed Christians have learned to read and apply Scripture in all its fullness.

The fullness of God's revelation

I have worshiped and ministered in music, in the last 40 years, not only in the CRC, but in two other Reformed denominations and in Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches. I think I'm in a position to appreciate just how biblically rich and spiritually potent is the Reformed understanding of Scripture and how much difference that profound understanding can make to helping people live their faith wholly and deeply each day in an increasingly anti-Christian environment. God has not changed. He still upholds his world and his Church. And he will not forsake those who trust him.

The sun, though now beginning to sink, is still shining, my cats are still napping; and I am not feeling so down. Though we fall short in our service to him, *his* care for us and all his world is never faulty, always faithful.

Thinking of God's faithfulness despite our faltering, and looking at my trustfully resting cats, I'm reminded of the poem *Jubilate Agno* ("Rejoice in the Lamb") by the 18th century poet Christopher Smart. It begins:



*For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily
serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he
worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body seven times round
with elegant quickness....*

Smart goes on to describe at length and in keenly accurate detail all the cat-like habits he has observed, the unconscious daily fulfilling of which he sees as evidence that cats are "servants of the Living God." Though Smart was for a while forcibly confined to Bedlam (London's notorious asylum) for showing signs of what one modern source terms "religious mania" – and he wrote *Jubilate Agno* while there – this sounds refreshingly biblical (and one might say "Reformed"). The whole poem is well worth taking a look at.

Not exactly lunacy

Ever since I discovered Smart's poem (British composer Benjamin Britten set it to music using its English title), I've felt an affinity for Christopher Smart, and not just because he obviously loved cats. My brother-in-law might quip that perhaps it's because I can personally relate to Smart's mental unhinging! Maybe so! But it's much more: I'm convinced Christopher Smart knew who Jesus is. I like Smart's profound grasp of salvation, his unorthodox way of stating his keen understanding that all of creation exists to exalt and serve its Creator.

Thinking about that great truth tends to banish the cumulative effects of many gray days. Perhaps I should show Smart's poem to that Lutheran pastor. It might actually give him a renewed perspective on the nature of the God he serves.

Christopher Smart was sent to Bedlam, it is said, because he accosted people, imploring them to kneel and pray for him. That hardly seems like lunacy. The great Dr. Samuel Johnson was among those who felt that Smart deserved to remain at large. "I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else," said Johnson. Johnson himself was often tormented by doubts about his own standing before God. He must have understood Smart in a way many did not. Perhaps some of us aren't quite so forward in the manner in which we ask for the prayers of others, but the asking is surely no aberration, and, in fact, we members of Christ's body are expected to do it. And we should do it daily. Like cats do, in their way.

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com



News/Business Directory

Children First grants help make private schools affordable for low income families

TORONTO, ON – Children First: School Choice Trust is once again offering grants to low income families in Ontario who feel their children would benefit by attending a private school.

Children First grants are awarded based solely on financial need. The program provides grants that cover half the cost of tuition at any Ontario private school, up to a maximum of \$4,000.

"I didn't feel my children were doing well in the public school system and I needed to find an alternative. Children First gave us the option to choose and allowed us to find a school that matched our children's needs," says Helena Dyck, whose four children have been receiving grants since 2004.

Founded in 2003, Children First School Choice Trust supports 1,000 economically disadvantaged students attending more than 200 private schools across Ontario. The grants are available as early as junior kindergarten and are renewable until the students complete Grade 8, subject to funding availability.

Tuition at private schools participating in the Children First program ranges from \$650 to \$24,175 per year. The average tuition at schools chosen by Children First families is \$5,020 and the average grant

just over \$2,351.

Once a family is awarded a grant, they can choose which private school their child will attend, including, Montessori, Waldorf, arts, academic, and special needs schools.

"Private school education offers families many choices and our program helps make those choices available to parents who may not otherwise be able to afford it," said Michael Thomas, Children First Program Director.

"Children First helps families who have different needs, whether it's a desire for smaller class sizes to help their kids catch up, developing artistic talents, or just wanting a safe school that teaches values important to the family."

Parents can apply online for a Children First School Choice Trust grant at www.childrenfirstgrants.ca

Applications can also be submitted by mail or parents can apply over the phone at 1-866-924-8881. The application deadline is March 31, 2008.

All new grants will be awarded in April via a random lottery once the applicant's financial need has been determined.



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Classifieds

Birthday		Obituaries
<p>With thanksgiving to God we are pleased to announce that on February 9th, 2008</p>  <p>LOUISE NAMINK (nee Jongejan) hopes to celebrate her 90th birthday.</p> <p>Children: Bernie & Margaret Bergsma, <i>Georgetown, ON</i> Tony & Audrey VanderKooy, <i>Binbrook, ON</i> Frank & Ineke Namink, <i>Goderich, ON</i> Bill & Robin Namink, <i>Wallaceburg, ON</i> Peter & Jane Namink, <i>Clinton, ON</i> Eric Namink, <i>Georgetown, ON</i> Grandchildren and great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Congratulations with love to mom, grandma and great-grandma.</p> <p>Correspondence may be sent to: Louise Namink Grace Manor 310 North 45 Kingknoll Drive, Brampton ON L6Y 5P2</p>	<p>Peacefully at Longfields Manor on Tuesday January 1, 2007 in her 95th year</p> <p>REINDJE STENFERT (nee Berends) of Ottawa Ontario. Beloved wife of the late Gijsbert Stenfert.</p> <p>Much loved mother of: Toni Hartholt (Martin), <i>Vars ON</i> Robert, Derek, Kristen (Nick Herwig) Art Stenfert (Sylvia), <i>Brockville ON</i> Lena (Michael Pearson), Kristianna (Geoff Joustra), Kyle, Benjamin (Laurie), Nathan (Margaret), & the late Kevin Stenfert</p> <p>Loving great-grandmother of Samantha, Courtney, Cameron, Julianna, Jeremiah and Scott.</p> <p>Dear sister of Rie VanDijk-Berends and a large extended family in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Funeral service was held at the Calvary Christian Reformed Church in Ottawa on January 4, 2008 with interment at Capital Memorial Gardens.</p> <p>Memorial donations may be made to the Community Christian School, 2681 Glen St. Metcalfe ON K0A 2P0</p> <p><i>Romans 12:12</i></p> <p>Correspondence: Toni Hartholt, 5075 Carlsbad Lane, Vars ON K0A 3H0</p> <p>MARTINA DROK (Vermey) December 30, 1934 - January 5, 2008</p> <p>In Montreal, peacefully, Martina went to be with the Lord.</p> <p>Beloved wife of Frederik Loving mother of David & Belinda Drok Loving Granny of Kristen Drok and Rachelle Drok We all love and miss you.</p> <p>Correspondence: 3860 Kingsway Drive Crown Point IN 46307</p> <p> Dutch Service February 24, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. Ancaster Christian Reformed Church Rev. John Klomps will be preaching</p>	<p>Rijsoord, Holland October 15, 1913</p> <p>Surrounded by her family at Shalom Manor the Lord took home our mother, Oma, and Oma-the-Great</p> <p>ELISABETH COLENBRANDER (nee Bestebreurtje)</p> <p>Predeceased in 1967 by her loving husband of 26 years, John Colenbrander and grandson, Jeffrey Bezuyen.</p> <p>Loving mother of: Ineke & John Bezuyen, <i>Vineland Station, ON</i> Sarah & John Cook, <i>Ottawa, ON</i> Christina & Jim Kelly, <i>Vancouver, BC</i> Fred & Annette Colenbrander, <i>Brantford, ON</i></p> <p>Loving grandmother to 12 grandchildren & 14 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>A service was held on Dec. 19, 2007 in Covenant CRC, St. Catharines, ON.</p> <p><i>The LORD will keep you from all harm – He will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. Psalm 121:7 & 8</i></p> <p>Correspondence: Ineke Bezuyen, 3306 Second Ave, Vineland Station ON L0R 2E0</p> <p>Grimsby, Ontario December 16, 2007</p>  <p>CLARA (Klaasje) BROUWER (nee van der Veen) Beloved wife of the late Henry (1980) Loving mother of: Anne & Jake Lopers, <i>Whitby, Ontario</i> Sid & Bonnie Brouwer, <i>Guelph, Ontario</i> Larry & Anne Brouwer, <i>Drayton, Ontario</i> Joyce & Pat Lawler, <i>Guelph, Ontario</i></p> <p>Loving beppe of 12 grandchildren & 19 great-grandchildren</p> <p>Mom was an inspiration to all she met and especially her family. We will miss her so much but our comfort is knowing that she has run a good race and she is now with the Lord.</p> <p>Correspondence: Anne Lopers, 11 Forest Road Whitby ON L1N3N7</p> <p>Beetsterswaag, Holland March 13, 1913</p> <p>Guelph, Ontario January 11, 2008</p> <p>Surrounded by her children, the Lord took home our dear mother, beppe and great-beppe</p>
<p>Vacation</p> <p>For rent: 2 bedroom, 2 bath guest cottage in Tallahassee, Florida. \$650 per week furnished with linens, close to state park, hiking & biking trails, tennis. Call 850-386-6648</p> <p>Holiday in Holland Beautiful self-contained cottage in Friesland www.chestnutlane.nl</p> <p>Christian couple willing to drive your vehicle from Florida to southern Ontario first week of April, 2008. Please call 519-638-5123.</p> <p>25th Anniversary Concert by the 130 voice of the Hosanna Choir at Hamilton Place March 29 at 7:30 pm. Guests include the Mattaniah Male Choir, Liselotte Rokyta - panflute and many others. All under the direction of Herman den Hollander. Tickets are \$10 and \$15, available at ticketmaster* outlets, CoppsColliseum Box office, ticketmaster.ca or charge by phone at 905-527-7666, 416-870-8000*(*convenience fee at ticketmaster) or contact the choir at 905-628-1211 visit www.hosanna-choir.org</p>	<p>Ministry Position – Pastor</p> <p><i>We are searching for a special kind of person!</i></p> <p>Did you know that Fredericton, New Brunswick has more days of sunshine than any other city in Canada?</p> <p>Did you know that Fredericton has numerous walking trails, two universities and a provincial legislature, is a great place for young families, sits on the beautiful St. John River and is an hour or so away from the famous Bay of Fundy?</p> <p>Did you know that the Fredericton CRC, with 107 professing members and 42 families, is in a period of transition and rebuilding?</p> <p>And did you also know we are looking for a pastor who will provide thought-provoking preaching, give spiritual leadership to younger and older alike, help us rekindle a vision and passion for God's Kingdom, enjoys a coffee/tea and a chat with church members, is ecumenically minded, and could be seduced by the raw beauty of a province that is not only Canada's best kept secret but reveals the handiwork of its Creator at every turn?</p> <p>You can call Dave van Berkel, Search Committee Chair, at 506-451-1913 or email search@FrederictonCRC.com for more information and a church profile.</p> <p>THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN NORTH AMERICA has a full-time opening for a Director of Chaplaincy Ministries</p> <p>This position will recruit and serve the Chaplains of the Christian Reformed Church as they carry out their ministries in various settings. For more information visit www.crcna.org or apply at apply@crcna.org. Deadline March 1, 2008.</p>	<p>MINISTRY COORDINATOR POSITION</p> <p>Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Dunnville is seeking a part-time gifted individual to direct our Ministries. Areas of responsibility include leadership training, Spiritual Gift classes, creating and maintaining a Gift Bank, and implementing new programs. The successful candidate must be committed to the Reformed Faith with a willingness to become a member of Bethel Church, capable of providing Biblical Leadership, able to work effectively within a team, have skills in administration, organization and oral/written communication, computer skills essential.</p> <p>A full job description is available upon request from BethelCRC@mountaincable.net.</p> <p>Mail resume to: Bethel CRC PO Box 96, Dunnville ON N1A 2X1 or fax to (905)774-3644 or email BethelCRC@mountaincable.net</p> <p>WORSHIP COORDINATOR POSITION</p> <p>Bethel Christian Reformed Church of Dunnville is seeking a gifted individual to direct our Worship. This part-time position has oversight of the music and worship activities of the church. Areas of responsibility include the planning and coordinating of all worship services; planning and supervising performing groups, including praise teams, instrumentals, drama. The successful candidate must have a love for the Lord and strong support for the ministries of Bethel, demonstrated leadership and administrative skills, and an ability to work well with volunteers and members of the ministry team.</p> <p>A full job description is available upon request from BethelCRC@mountaincable.net.</p> <p>Mail resume to: Bethel CRC PO Box 96, Dunnville ON N1A 2X1 or fax to (905)774-3644 or email BethelCRC@mountaincable.net</p>

Job Opportunities

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Jan 27** Maranatha CRC, **Cambridge** 50th anniversary. A special service to be held at 10 a.m. More events will be held in April.
- Feb 15-17** Marriage encounter weekend in **Niagara Falls, ON**. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org.
- Feb 24** Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Klomps will be preaching.
- March 29 - Hamilton** - 25th Anniversary Concert by the 130 voice of the Hosanna Choir at Hamilton Place at 7:30 pm. Guests include the Mattaniah Male Choir, Liselotte Rokyta - panflute and many others. All under the direction of Herman den Hollander. Tickets are \$10 and \$15, available at ticketmaster* outlets, CoppsColliseum Box office, ticketmaster.ca* or charge by phone at 905-527-7666, 416-870-8000* (*convenience fee at ticketmaster) or contact the choir at 905-628-1211 visit www.hosanna-choir.org
- March 29** Missions Conference at Bethel CRC, **Waterdown** for local church leaders, missions advocates, and short term missions participants. For registration information visit Christian Reformed World Missions at www.crwmm.org or contact John & Margaret den Otter 905-331-3205 or jdenotter@cogeco.ca
- April 19, 20** Maranatha CRC, **Cambridge** 50th anniversary. Celebrations and special events will be held on Saturday April 19 at 7 p.m. and Sunday April 20 during the 10 a.m. service.
- May 2-4** Marriage encounter weekend in **London, ON**. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org.

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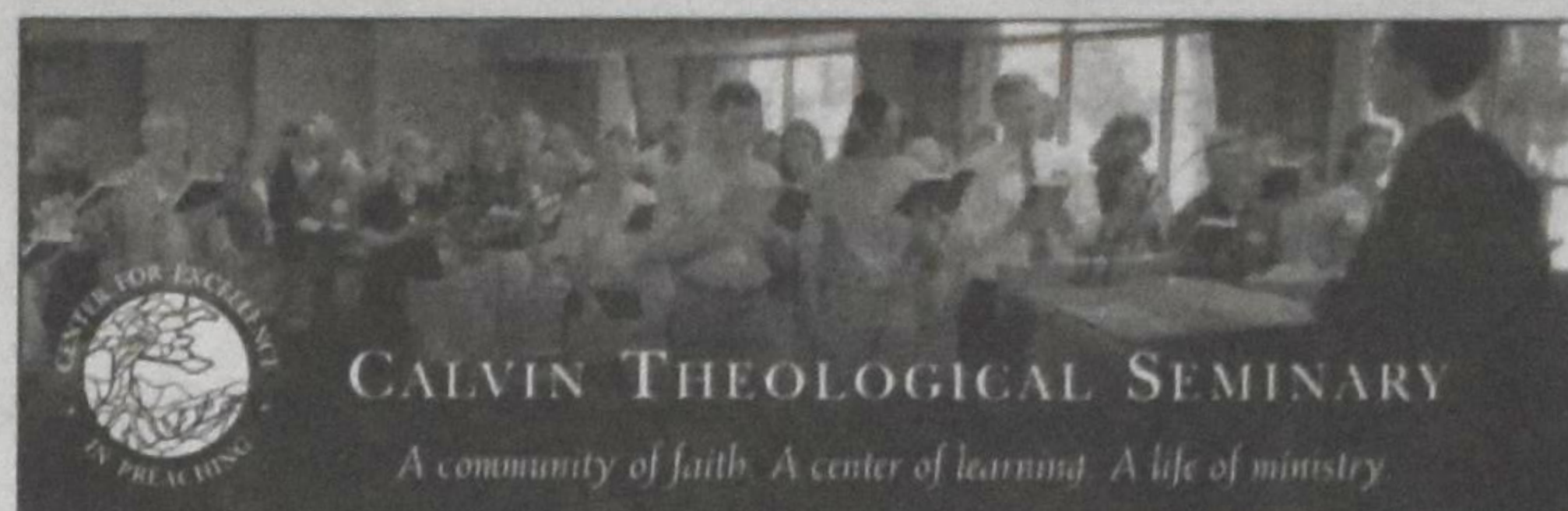
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News

Winds of global fashion swirl through rural Namibia

Stephanie Hanes

Dordabis, Namibia – A few miles past this dusty, empty town, beyond the place where the tar road ends and donkey carts start replacing cars, the Ibenstein weaving center sits in a grove of thorn trees that sprout from the dry, red earth.

"You found it," Wolfgang Ramdohr says cheerfully, walking across the dirt courtyard that divides Ibenstein's low-slung, aluminum-topped buildings. His dogs follow him, and then quickly head for the shade.

Mr. Ramdohr and his wife, Anne, run this weaving center, the first place in Namibia to make what are now the country's trademark wool carpets. They are only a few hours from Windhoek, Namibia's capital, but in many ways they are in another world. There was no electricity here until 1990, and until recently a telephone operator had to connect farms to outside lines. Many of the looms are the same as the ones Anne's grandmother ordered built when she started the business in the 1950s; outside, spinners twirl wool by hand.

It is not, at first glance, the sort of place one would imagine as a barometer of global tastes and trends. But in many ways, that's just what Ibenstein is.

The story of what has happened here at the edge of the Kalahari Desert, to Ibenstein, to Namibia's rug art, and to the weavers who make it, is a lesson in globalization. It shows how in today's connected world, even African folk art is affected by changes in regional industry, the whims of Parisian fashion houses, or the shifting values of middle America.

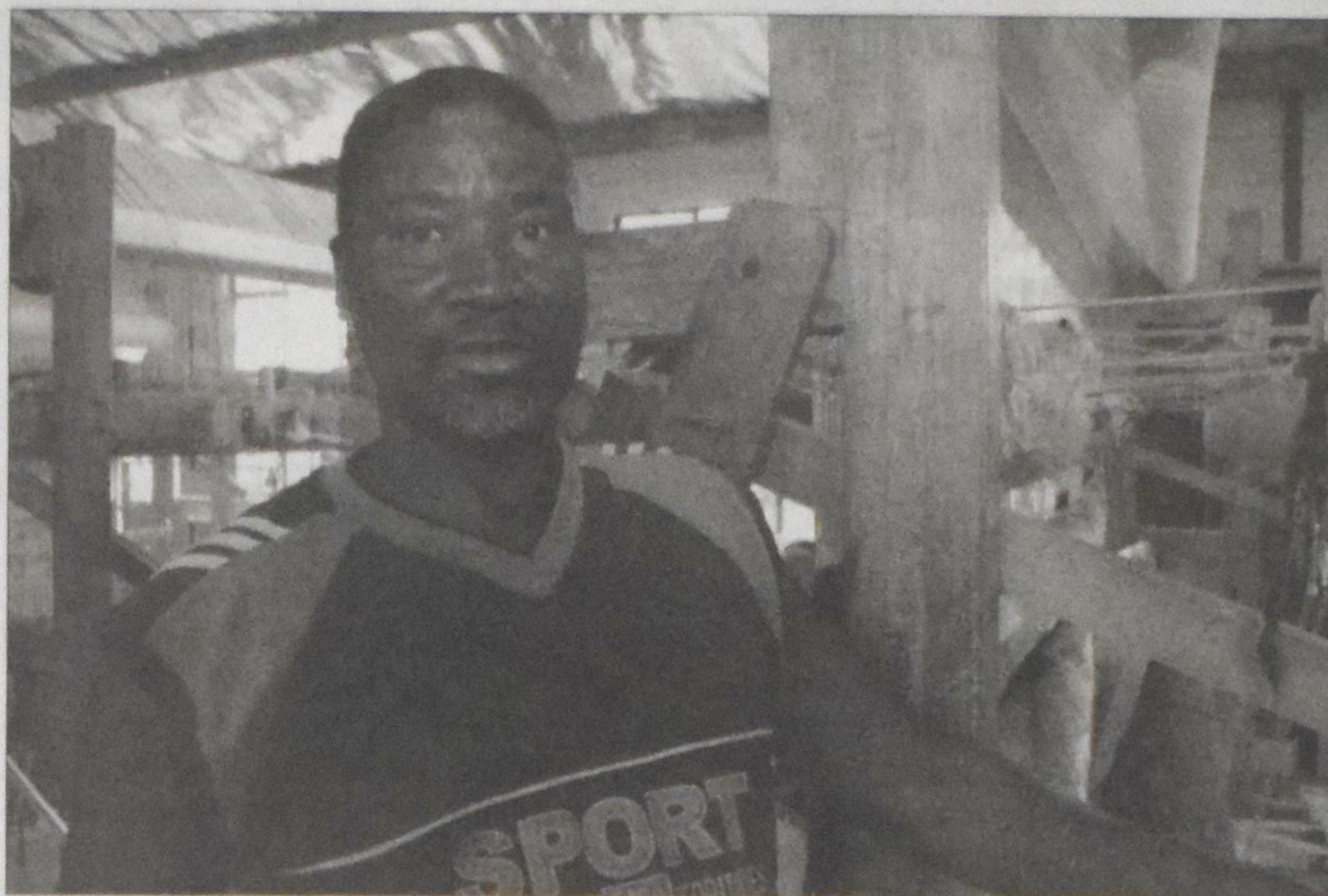
"What people here make is definitely connected to trends in other places," says Louise Casserley, an assistant at Johannesburg's Art Africa, a store that highlights indigenous art from around the region.

For instance, she says, recycled and "green" African art is becoming much more popular, in large part because of a growing European and American inclination to buy "sustainable" pieces. And as regional industries ebb and flow – partly because of global demands – local crafters change how they use related materials.

Namibian bracelets made of PVC pipes, colorful South African bowls made from telephone wire, and Zimbabwean sculpture made from hubcaps – these all rise and fall with waves of seemingly unrelated consumer demand.

"People have used ingenious things for art," Ms. Casserley says. "They use things that are around." The Ibenstein story starts the way many of these African art tales do: with a byproduct.

In the early 1900s, colonists here were struggling with how to make vast and arid German South West Africa (now Namibia)



productive. When they found that farming wasn't working, they tried importing Karakul sheep, a central Asian breed whose pelts were considered the height of fashion throughout Europe.

The sheep flourished, as did the ranchers. By the 1930s, the 10 ewes and two rams imported two decades before had become 1.7 million sheep; by the 1960s, there were 5 million. And demand was ever growing.

"All of southern Namibia's development was financed by the Karakul," Ramdohr says. "The sheep were called 'the black diamonds of Namibia.'"

The popular sheepskin coats were made from lamb pelts. But to have a steady supply of lambs, the farmers needed breeding sheep. And adults need shearing twice a year.

To most farmers, the wool was useless – too coarse for clothing. Some threw it away; others used it to help pave roads. But at the large Ibenstein farm near Dordabis, Marianne Krafft decided to try to use that wool for weaving.

Ms. Krafft was an artist, and wanted to come up with some sort of employment for the farmworkers' wives who lived on her land. She hired master weavers from Germany to teach her staff, and later built looms for making carpets. The business started to take off.

Soon, others followed her lead. By the time Anne Ramdohr's parents – Krafft's daughter and son-in-law – were running the weaving center, there were as many as 15 similar businesses in the area, all making rugs with the discarded wool of the Karakul.

The rugs were eye-catching and became the number one purchase for tourists. Although the rugs originally had only natural colors, soon weavers started incorporating dyed wool to make bright geometric shapes and African scenes with lions and elands and thorn trees. It was art that seemed one with this vast, red dryness.

"They were so fashionable, the carpets,"



Ramdohr says. Most went overseas.

Isaak Gameb, a farmworker's son, started at Ibenstein in the 1970s. As a child, he would stop here during his five-mile walk home from school. Eventually Krafft's daughter, then running the center, gave him a job – first as a spinner, then as a weaver.

"My specialty is animals," Mr. Gameb says. "Now I make my own designs."

Today, Gameb sits at one of Ibenstein's massive looms, working with two other men to finish a carpet for a Windhoek business. He says he loves his work – but that a decade ago he had more company.

During the 1970s and '80s, Ibenstein employed as many as eight weavers and a few dozen other employees. Today, Gameb is one of only seven Ibenstein workers.

The downsizing happened in the 1990s, Ramdohr says, but the problem had started a decade earlier, when consumers in Europe and the United States started to reject fur. In 1980, he says, three million Karakul skins were exported from Namibia; four years

later, that had dropped to 700,000. Today, fewer than 100,000 pelts leave the country. And although there seems to be increasing interest in the pelts again – mainly from Asia and Russia – the industry is a fraction of what it once was.

For weavers, that means their raw material is more expensive, and there's less of it. To Ibenstein, that spells cutbacks.

"I have to pay them decent wages," he says. "It's why the profit margin is so minimal."

Meanwhile, interior designers in the US started to turn their backs on big carpets – and with 80 percent of Ibenstein's wares headed abroad, this left a mark.

At the Namibia Craft Center in Windhoek, where the country's growing number of tourists shop for all sorts of local artwork, shopkeeper Paulina Shikongo says that Ibenstein rugs still sell well. But she

said usually customers buy smaller, less expensive rugs.

The larger rugs "are very nice," she says, "but they are difficult to ship."

In Dordabis, the Ramdohrs are searching for new ways to appeal to foreign buyers. Without a change, they say, they worry that they might have to close their generations-old center. So this time, rather than furs, they are trying to tap into a new fashion fad: ethical clothing.

Anne Ramdohr says she is trying to incorporate silk from the empty cocoons of a local moth into her wares; a number of nongovernmental organizations have already dubbed "Kalahari silk" projects good for the environment and a way to promote sustainable development.

"We are competing with Asia now," she says, glancing at the decades-old looms. "We have to find a niche."

Stephanie Hanes is a freelance reporter based in Johannesburg, South Africa.